

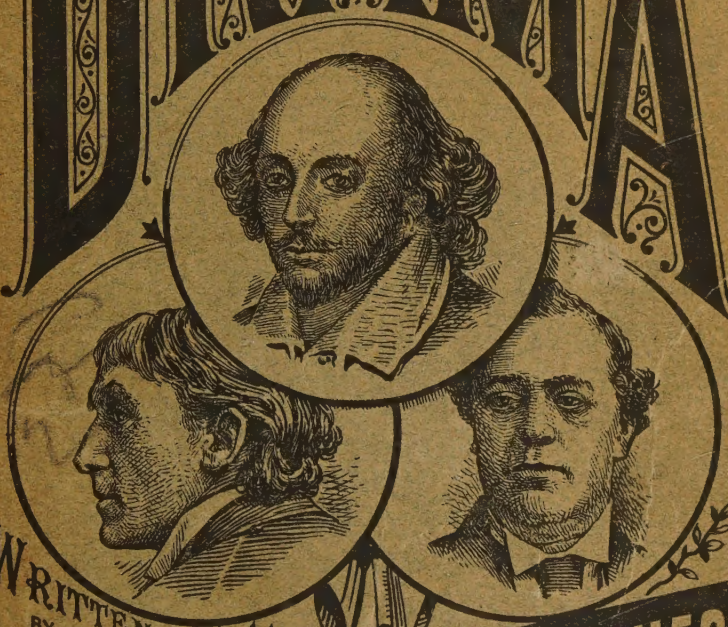
ONE SHILLING.

HIGNETT'S SMOKING MIXTURE, } THIS TOBACCO has become a standard article in the trade. It is much esteemed by smokers for its intrinsic qualities.

LARKINS

AND THE

DRAM



WRITTEN
BY
J. JOHNSON.

OVER 70

SKETCHES

BY
A. BOUCHETTE.

HIGNETT'S SMOKING MIXTURE, }

THIS TOBACCO has become a standard article in the trade. It is much esteemed by smokers for its intrinsic qualities.

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LARKINS

AND THE

DRAMA.

BY

JAMES JOHNSON,

ILLUSTRATED BY

A. BOUCHETTE.

Engraved by Allison's Process.



- Chap. 1.—“The Entertainment at Home.”
,, 2.—“The Hall.”
,, 3.—“The Literary Institute, Elocution
Class, and Private Theatre.”
,, 4.—“Manhood.”
,, 5.—“In it.”
,, 6.—“The Company.”
,, 7.—“The Curtain up.”
,, 8.—“Little Disturbances.”
,, 9.—“A chance for Larkins.”
,, 10.—“Larkins appears and exits.”

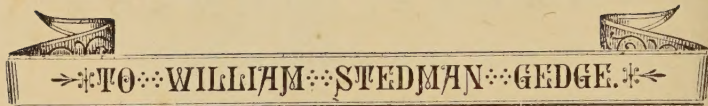


LONDON:

PRINTED BY R. TILLING, WARNER STREET, SOUTHWARK, S.E.

1880





MY DEAR GEDGE,

This wee sketch, written many years ago, but only now
printed and published, I dedicate to you.

Had I re-written it: gain in style would have read loss in
freshness.

Yours truly,

JAMES JOHNSON,

Herne Hill.

XMAS, 1880.

FIC JOH
Johnson, James
Larkins and the drama
1880.

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Special Collection
Hamilton



THE AMATEUR DRAMA.

In Three Scenes.—Scene I.

THE “ENTERTAINMENT AT HOME.”



JOHN LARKINS is a tall youth grown almost entirely from his legs, and, as he and several of his friends have been very dissipated of late, their relations have allowed them to hold dramatic performances among themselves at home, in the hope of weaning them from sucking so many out-of-door cigars.

And “the” event of the entertainment this next Easter Tuesday is Julius Cæsar, alias J. L.; who, like many other actors, takes the possessor of the title of the play to be the principal part.

“We had the last night” says John, “at my place, this comes off at Ted Good’s, and if the rest were of my mind we should have a first floor of our own with trap doors and everything necessary. People are

eager enough to have our nights come off.”

“Our people are,” remarks Ted.

“This is no time for joking,” rebukes John, asking who will “sketch” the copper for him.

"And not breeches," adds the tormenter.

"He fired in earnest, eh?" enquires a new member.



"Yes, dosed the barrel instead of flashing the pan with a cap and emptied the lot in the hindmost of my trowsers, and to make the effect greater sent me down like one of his father's sacks of flour."

"I'm done!"

"You will be in your turn, but to go on with the trowsers, they were covered with yellow, which to make out he hadn't fired, he said was owing to the spontaneous combustibility of the gunpowder—I use his own words—depositing phosphoric acid upon the coverings of my legs. He was very kind after it, though," continues the speaker, eyeing the new member with an almost fatherly regard.

"Well, that shows a good heart."

"Yes. He decomposed the acid with ammonia; and, using a trifle too much of that he counteracted it with a wine glass of another acid which burnt the trowsers to cinders; and, of course, after that there was no more bother."

And having so delivered himself the young cynic chaunts to the effect, that "a rum-my old chap is the old Lar-kins!"

It is the night previous to the play and John tosses from side to side, and dire to relate, they have stabbed him, really stabbed him, and in his fright he wakes. Joy! it is only a dream.



"And if it were only morning, daylight," murmurs Caesar, "I'd fix this look, get up and try the dying business again."

This agony touch has been a great source of trouble, for try all he can he is only equal to the expression of a face under the influence of salts taken warm.

It is morning and he is up and doing. No office this day, but in its stead runnings to and fro, bandboxes and attitudes in front of the looking glass.

The poet says, "muffling up his face"

and why should not he, Larkins, the Cæsar that is to be, muffle up his too, and not only muffle it up but die muffled up?

His sister has a long black muff, and placed carefully upon his head and attached to a wig it will form no insignificant part of the evening's amusement.

The performance is announced for seven, and the members are required at four.

"It looks very well," says the new amateur, "when the room-door is opened."

"Wait till the lights are on," cries Larkins.

"Wherever did the scenes come from?" asks a young fellow, curiously.

"Larkins's dodge," answers Charley, "cuttings from a blind-maker's."

"And they'd look well, too," adds John, proudly, "if we had'n't bits of doors on one side and pieces of forests on the other."

Then taking a box in his arms like one of those used for hot, cheap and popular, cycloped saveloys, he exclaims, "now gentlemen, we can dress." And he commences.

Firstly, he rams his legs into a pair of his sister's coloured stockings, which process is only successful when a friend makes an incision in the feet part; secondly, he puts on a pair of his father's carpet slippers over his boots; thirdly, he draws and fastens his trowsers up to his knees; fourthly, he puts on a clean, white shirt, with the front part buttoned at his back; fifthly, he garnishes his neck with one of his mother's laced collars, combs his hair behind his ears, chalks his nose and forehead and rouges his cheeks, and blackens his eyebrows with burnt cork; sixthly, he sucks a square inch of glue, holds it over the flame of a candle and rubs it upon his chin, and other parts where he had vainly shaved for hair, and taking a shilling mustache and a sixpenny imperial, he presses them to the gluey parts; and seventhly and lastly, he takes a wig out of the box and adjusts it upon his head in such a manner that it shews its preponderance of jet black over the straggling locks of the bright red wire hair of the Cæsar. His hands are encased in a pair of white kid gloves, an opera cloak is over his shoulders; and, all but the muff, Great Julius is equipped. The costume is not, perhaps, strictly in keeping with Italy's climate or history, nor the brown neck in unison with the red and white of his face; but what all this to the fact, that beautiful as are the mustache and imperial, Larkins cannot move his gluey jaws?

"You see it all 'looks' well, but it may come off," and Julius indicates the mustache by the holding up of a white kid.

"Put the muff on carefully, there's a good fellow; it's the great thing in the part."

The muff is stuck on and tacked to the wiggy head and then Larkins says he'll practise his part, which he does by striding about with a motion between that peculiar to a turkey cock and a gentleman whose whole care consists in the carrying of weight upon his hips.

"Blest if he 'don't' look the thing!" exclaims the new member.

"Do you know the prologue?" asks Charley.

"Not quite," replies John, "I've been so bothered with the dying look that I've scarcely glanced at it; I must do so now, though."

Whereupon he pretends to study and swallow wholesale some lines he has learned many days previously. The manner whereof, is, to walk up and down behind the blanket-curtain, to pucker his lips, look abstractedly at the ceiling, place his hand to his forehead and to let off various "ah's."

"Drop of wine?" says Ted Good.

"No thank you, I've got some in a bottle over there to get my pecker up," and a corner is indicated where repose coats and vests.

"Brutus drinks with Cæsar," whispers Charley to Good, "and a little dosing upon scientific principles will give life to the Emperor," after which saying Larkins's wine becomes doctored.

Up goes the curtain and reveals Larkins, scroll in hand, jumping out the words, "Ladies and Gentlemen. The stage is the type of life, where shews its cares, its joys, its strife."

Getting confidence as he becomes used to the sound of his voice, he looks ahead and proceeds.

"The world's the chief and players you, with wings and plots to change time's view. You've made your entrance, passed the scene, and lived the years that rolled between."

Then starting frantically upon his left leg and jerking his right arm, he goes on. "Quick! look! the exit's stealing round, you'll hear the murm'ring, empty sound; as in the last, expiring dart, life flies its sad and weary part!"

At the end of this, an elderly gentleman, suffering from a recent crushing of a corn, cries out "hear! hear!" and Good, in obedience to the stage directions of Larkins, blows out some of the candles, which gives the elderly gentleman an opportunity of knocking his approbation with his stick upon the offending toes by his side.



The candles are re-lit, and John finishes, "Ah! gentles then bear with us all, and kindly let our curtain fall!"

After which sudden pull up, the blanket and Larkins bob down together. When ensue renewed applause and the voice of one Julius to the effect that it is "splendid" and a "discerning audience, really, you know."

Julius Cæsar commences at the famous scene where somebody wants somebody else to go and see a certain "course." And Larkins is singularly careful of his friend's fame in the matter of insisting upon the play terminating with the death of Cæsar, or in proper diction with the ending of himself, Larkins.

He has also cut out several scenes in which there is no Cæsar. And be it known that as every Roman presents the same appearance in wig, tucked up trowsers and paint; so every Roman goes through his lines in a cadence between a wail and a tune, till breath becomes short, and only uses action when personally engaged in mouthing. All the "idle creatures" have gone home and the play begins in its sense of "business." Brutus and Cassius nod their heads and point their fingers at one another, and give their eyebrows plenty of opening and shutting exercise, and the former asks the latter; "what means this shouting?"

And when Brutus has waited a considerable time there comes a vigorous "hurrahy!" from Cæsar, who is located at the back, followed by so many "hurrahs," that the chief is heard to harangue his men to order.

"And," says Brutus to Cassius, "isn't it a game," and then the dialogue is continued by Cassius civilly requesting the wax candle above his head to "bear the palm alone?" When occurs mention



of another general shout by Brutus, followed by a single "hurrah" from the secretary. Some more hurraing ensues and then Cæsar enters, to suddenly draw back and say: "Antonius?" Upon which, the Roman so named, who is engaged in staring at Larkins's sister, suddenly jerks out, "Cæsar"; when Cassius, the most boisterous of the company, advises Antonius to do no such thing, but to "let her alone."

A frown gathers below the muff of the mighty Julius, as he requests to have no men about him save such as are "fat."

"And if you roll your legs about so," whispers Charley, "we shall all be fat enough presently, for the candles will be about our ears." And, after he has so spoken, one gentleman accuses another of plucking him by the cloak, when nothing of the sort has taken place. Which is followed by other and equally correct concords between the action and the word, by no means uncommon in matters theatrical, till the great scene comes on.

"For goodness' sake see to the red fire," says Larkins, earnestly, previous to going on to be stabbed. "A bit ago," adds Julius, "I felt nervous; but now I am quite jolly!" and the Roman drains the last of his bottle contents, as doctored by Charley.

"Strong stuff, that port," says Larkins, "If I get on all right to the end I'll stand something all round."

"That you'll not be able to do," remarks Good, quietly, "for Julius Cæsar was so hard up, getting on for two thousand years ago, that he had to come here for 'tin;' so it's not likely he can be rich now."

Larkins is evidently struck, and whether Cæsar was, the late "Napoleon" does not say. The Romans, as usual, vainly sue Cæsar to yield their request, and also, per usual, the Emperor compares himself to the Northern star, though his twinkling is only visible in the legs, and those legs, to break the unities, unfixed.

Charley says Cæsar is in the milky way of a morning. "Speak, hands for me!" cries Larkins, loudly, knowing them to be his last words, almost, and determining to give them with climax effect.

Quickly does the great Cæsar fell the impious Metellus, the moment he commences to assail him, as agreed by Larkins at re-

hearsal. Convulsively he gasps and stamps and snorts at each stab of the conspirators, till at last Brutus does "the" stab by dealing such a scientific punch in Julius's wind as to bring a finer look of dying anguish to Cæsar's face than all the practice before the looking glass. The queer mixture of Charley's is strong within the expiring Roman, for, upon the receipt of the stab, he looks puzzled and exclaims, "Et tu, Brutes?" and then fell Cæsar. After which, fall he does amid applause and red fire. "Didn't he go down a spank!" says Charley, as the elderly gentleman calls out "Cæsar! Brutus! Cassius!"



"Come on with me," cries Larkins, forgetful of the knock in the side in the delights of the call. "Not with you, that is, not before you," say Ted and Charley. So in front of the audience stands Larkins, muff on head, shaky in legs and with a stream of red and white perspiration rolling down his neck. "Bravo!" exclaims the elderly gentleman and "bravo" echo the rest. "Do you but slope now, Larkins," as the Americans have it, you will be right, but alas! Charley whispers from the side "take off your muff, old fellow,



don't you hear the people applauding you?" With a jump, Larkins bows and tugs off his head gear, and the audience roar, and the elderly gentleman's corny toes are high in the air; for the moustache drops to the ground and the wig and muff are in Larkins's hands and his red hair shoots up, and Cæsar knows not what to do until

he roars out for Brutus to "come on like a man, a man," and places himself in a sparring attitude and rushes behind the blanket with something as strong, if not as judicious, as Shakespeare on his lips.

"Where is he" cries Larkins, blindly, as the members hold their sides and cry "don't" the time Charley once more mimics Larkins's look into his wiggy hand?



"You've been up to foolery all the night," expostulates John, half crying with mortification, "particularly at the scene of the Capitol."

"Which we made a *capital* scene," cry the amateurs.

It takes five minutes coaxing to bring Larkins to consider it all an accident, and so he gets to the front and looks round upon the people as saying; "You see; I'm the chap who did

JULIUS CÆSAR."





Scene II.

THE "HALL."



AS the parents of the members of the club object to have their homes turned quite inside out to suit the growing requirements made upon them, at the instigation of Larkins, a hall is taken one night a week for practice and entertainments.

Which answers very well save that some Latter Day Saints use the place one night a week too. The result of which is that friends of the dramatic gentlemen constantly turn up to find long faced

people singing hymns to the tune of "Oh Syeuseanna, don't yer cry for me!" and that occasional saints pop in to find to their utter astonishment some young fellow directing another to take off somebody's head, to the tune that it is so much for "Buckingham!"

It is a night when Larkins expects a goodly number of members and their friends, for he is to give with others of the club, a long selection from "Hamlet." And to his great joy, as he commences, he notices some ten or twelve strange faces among the audience.

"I thought somehow," he communes, "the fellows would tell their friends and that there'd be a muster; but certainly nothing like this. It is very encouraging, very encouraging, indeed," he thinks, and so he begins to say he "could drink hot blood," and do several other things of an equally disagreeable and improbable nature.

"What?" almost screams an elderly female, jumping up and looking round in alarm.



"Drink hot blood!" says Larkins, indignantly and snappishly "it's the 'text' isn't it?"

"Where?" cries the woman.

"Now, look here" says John, catching the eyes of his startled members, "it's very nice and all that sort of thing, you know, to have a critical audience; but, confound me! if it's fair to follow with paper and pencil right before my very eyes."

"Confound ! confound him !" mutters a red-nosed, elderly gentleman, rubbing his fiery organ as he speaks, and glancing around in bewilderment.



John begins to rub *his* nose by this time and to look amazed, for just at the door he sees a tall, lank young man bob down on his knees and shake his head.

"There is treachery here !" he cries, at last.

"You may depend upon it" exclaims he hurriedly to the members, "that Charley and Ted went out, unawares, for no good !" And so he steals to the door, followed cautiously by his coadjutors, and suspiciously by the strangers, and there on the pavement are his two tormentors, with serious countenances and imploring gestures and tones exhorting every passer by to go in and hear "The Rev. Mr. Smiffle."

"You won't go in !" says Charley, pityingly, to a jolly-looking working man, who is enjoying his pipe, after a hard day's work.

"No !" says the man, sulkily, "I wunt !"

"There !" cries Charley to Ted, who holds up his hands in horror, "'he wunt !' he says, 'he wunt' !"

"Oh !" adds Ted, earnestly, "he thinks tobacco in the open air better than the stuffy and filling odour of Smiffle and matting of the cocoa nut !" and then he winks at the owner of the pipe in such a way that the man takes the clay slowly out of his mouth, and sagely wags his head, to typify that he can make nothing at all of either of the mild-looking young gentlemen before him, or of the mat of their cocoa. And as at this moment they catch sight of Larkins, with his mouth open and his eyes at their fullest, they bend down and burst out into such a laugh that the working man laughs too, and when he is able to speak, says, that if there "was" a Mr. Smiffle, and that 'ere Mr. Smiffle was at all like them, blest if he would'nt go in and hear him, and send home for his old gal into the bargain !

"And you know," says Ted, apologizingly, to Larkins, when something like peace is restored, "it's a nasty place, and not at all fit for talent like yours !"

"Well, there's something in that," remarks John, "and at the Literary Institute Charley has been speaking about they do get a good attendance on their elocution practice nights, don't they ?"

"And it'll come cheaper," puts in a fat member, "than buying tickets for your friends to come to this place!"

"And none of mine will come here," says Larkins, "that is, they won't pay to come!"

"And to make up for the joke of to-night," cries Charley, "we've got up a lark for you!"

"Thank you," responds John, giving a significant sniff, as if man-traps were in the prospect.

"It's all right," says Frank, stoutly, "you pack up the books in the box and you'll see."

"Yes," remarks Larkins, "and I'll see that I pocket the key, too."

By this time it is quite dark, and the night being very cold, the streets are almost deserted, and the secretary and members are moving briskly along. John, with the box under his arm, a little



in advance of the others. By Ted's side lazily walks an out-of-the-way stout policeman, very red in the face, and evidently with no more breath than requisite for ordinary purposes; for he puffs as he walks.

"Do you think he can run?" whispers Charley to Ted.

"Not far," is the answer, "and as Larkins is weighted, it'll be about a match, I should think."

"Look out, then!" says Charley. So he calls the policeman "Mr. Inspector," and asks him if he can put them right for Bayswater, a distance of about seven miles from where they are situate, and he, Ted and the others make all sorts of stupid pretences of taking the man's attention from Larkins and the box.

"You'd better tell him to run," says Ted, excitedly, "or it'll be too late—see! he has noticed it!"

"Holloa!" cries the policeman, "you with that box, come here!"



"Run, Larkins! run for your life!" shouts Good, as he and the rest dodge from the man, and bending their bodies, and taking short, rapid toe-steps, they quickly widen the distance between them and the officer.

"It's all very well for you, fellows," expos-
tulates John, panting,
"to go on like that,
but I've this box, and
it's none of the lightest."

"Put it down then,
put it down," is the cry
from Ted, the time he
and Larkins and all are

running their hardest, with the policeman after them.

"Put it down, put it down, indeed!" sneers Larkins, nearly out of breath and hugging the box, like a monkey clasps a gift he can't eat himself, but is determined no one else shall; "who bought all the books, trusting to subscriptions to come in, that didn't come in?"

And so Larkins runs on, not asking what it is; for he knows enough of his two particular members to surmise that it may be for tilting a bill-board-man up on his wooden end in such a manner that he couldn't be got down again, considering the irons, or for flouring the policeman's back and then calling him "baker," and if not for one of these for something quite as likely to place him in that undesirable liquid known as "hot water."

"And no matter what happens!" cries Larkins, as he, at last, sinks upon his own door steps, "I can't run any more."

"And a lucky thing you can't!" gasps the corpulent policeman, falling full upon him, yet withal doing his duty and clinging to John's collar.

"What is it?" jerks Larkins, between short breathings.

"You—don't—know!" pants the officer, derisively.

"No!" shouts John.

"None of this row here!" exclaims Mr. Larkins, in his night dress, his head out of the window and a jug of water ready in his hand to pour over those whom he takes to be "brawlers."

He has to wake early has John's father and he was getting into bed when the yells reached his door.

"This!" shouts the policeman, clutching the box.

"Why it's our, that is, my, book-box," says John, in astonishment, opening it with the key as he speaks, "and I live here, and these" pointing to Ted and the others "are my friends!"

"And why," asks the astounded man, with a very powerful addition "didn't you say so at first?"

"You never asked me," says Larkins, "did he Ted?"

"No! he never asked, but took to running!" is the answer innocently given.

"Now you hear, father," persists John, looking up at his parent, as he speaks, "don't say in the morning that it's any of our faults, because you see it isn't!"

Mr. Larkins is so amazed that he holds the jug in such a careless manner that some of the water falls over the policeman just as he is looking up to explain, by which time Mrs. Larkins appears and says the man ought to be ashamed of himself to go and frighten "her" little boy.

"Your little boy, indeed!" snarls the officer, sopping up the water from the back of his neck, with his handkerchief, "his legs are longer than mine and have run me over a mile off my beat!"





Scene III.

“THE LITERARY INSTITUTE, ELOCUTION CLASS AND PRIVATE THEATRE.”



OUR friends find the Literary Institute “slow,” with its cold, white-washed walls, and green-baized, make-shift, rickety tables, and decanters of water. And were it not that an “Entertainment” is coming off, it is questionable if they would stay to wear the term of their tickets out.

And in this lively event there is sorrow, for the committee, in

this case a rich old lady, has petitioned the clergyman-president to allow neither ladies nor plays. Charley is awaiting his friends and looking comically at some “sticks” who draughts play at. Now Mr. Tucker, the clergyman, desires the goodwill of everybody and he is in the room to meet the “class,” in order to settle the entertainment programme so as to suit all parties, that is; nobody. Charley is very hard up for something to do, so he dips all the penholders in the ink-wells in the hope that some near sighted students will arrive to take notes.



"Now, gentlemen," says Mr. Tucker, sweetly, "no plays, and no lad—" ladies he is about to finish, but he checks himself and adds, "females, and we can arrange; for you must promise not to compromise me and I will leave the rest to you!"

"What! no ladies!" grumbles, Larkins.

"No females!" says Mr. Tucker, smilingly, though firmly.

"They always said 'ladies,' sir," cries John, stiffly, "where I was brought up!"

"And they put 'seminary' after it," whispers Ted to Charley, "for his mother kept a little school."

"Ladies!" says Mr. Tucker, scornfully, "no more spout on lecture platforms than they trouble ministers of the Gospel with such things as these!"

"I suppose, sir," remarks Charley, thoughtfully, and very respectfully, as if no interruption had taken place, "you have no objection to any little dialogue illustrative of history; such as where Cæsar is ended, for instance?"

"Oh! not the slightest!" says Mr. Tucker.

"Or to any little skit upon table turning?" suggests Ted.

"Not at all!" cries Mr. Tucker, quite delighted at the ease with which the difficult skein is unravelling.

"Wheugh!" softly whistles Larkins.

Mr. Tucker stares.

"He's subject to strange spasmodical ways, at times," says Ted, mildly, to Mr. Tucker, kicking Larkins smartly under the table on the shins, as he speaks.

"He looks like it," says Tucker, as John makes a wry face from the effects of the kick.

"And," laughs Charley, as Larkins is about to remonstrate, we'll call it; "Turning the Tables."

"Very good!" remarks Mr. Tucker, knowing as much about theatrical pieces as clowns of the boxing-week collect, and turning to depart.



"Faint! act! be frantic!" whispers Ted to John, who immediately sets his legs wide apart, places one hand to his forehead, says, "Ah!" looks in a manner that he means to be, and is, vacant, and suddenly clutches hold of Mr. Tucker's hair and falls; laughing "ha! ha! ha!"

Now there stands a large decanter of water by the side of the table, water very cold and very pure, and as Mr. Tucker catches sight of it, a merry twinkle just for an instant starts across his glance and he "blesses his soul," and says, "dear him!" and promptly empties the whole of the contents down Larkins's back, whence it permeates to his very boots.

"I'm,"—screams John, starting up, for his eyes have been closed.



"Hush!" cry Ted and Charley, "so well as you've done it, too, why he'll think you've been acting, if you say anything about it!"

And Larkins, when he is dry, tells this to his credit, sagely adding that after all it's a bad job, for if he really should die, people would not believe in him.

In the language of Charley, the atmosphere of the Institute is "too warm" for Larkins after his Tucker scene; so with his friends

he betakes himself to a private theatre. And so careful is Mr. Tucker, for they have their entertainment, afterwards, that when a lecturer arrives to give an evening on "Pilgrim's Progress," with views, that he stipulates for no "comic songs." The theatre is a long, dreary hall, with some few statue heads of the poets, bought from image-men, and placed on shelves here and there at the sides. At the stage end there are three roll scenes and what the proprietor is facetious enough to term "wings."

The play is the "Merchant of Venice," and the parts range from two and sixpence up to a guinea. John, of course, goes in for a guinea's worth and he is the Jew.

"You'll have a mustache and a wig for your two and sixpence," says the salesman of human characters to Good, and with this he is content.

The wardrobe arrives in a truck, and seeing that the Jew who brings it has trundled four miles and only gets fifteen shillings for his trouble, the whole concern is highly creditable to all concerned.

"But!" says the man, as he throws the heap of rubbish on the stage, "you'll have to send out for sixpennorth of pins, so I don't deceive nobody!"

"I say, look here," says Charley, "this cloak must have been Bassanio's when he was awfully hard up, for look at it, it's as brown as anything can be, and full of holes!"

"And my tights," quoth Larkins, are all in slits and shew my,— "legs," he is about to say, but as he has padded his stockings with wool to make his calves look big he puts in "stockings."

"Suck this indian ink," observes the Jew, calmly, "and rub it over the parts and that's all right!"

"And now for the wig," cries John, "and I'll have no games this time for I'll tie it to my head."

"And," laugh Ted and Charley, "with this fishing hook we'll give you a turn before the night's out!"

Well, in the same dress, Larkins plays in a first piece, and he has to stab Good, and he is so long about it that Charley slyly beckons his friend off the stage and lets down the curtain. Now Larkins has studied this stab, so he snorts quite in front of the little stage and suddenly shuts his eyes and stabs the—curtain!

"Never mind," whispers the ever alert Charley, "stab yourself, the people won't know anything about it," and so successful is John in acting upon the hint that he falls, owing to the united pull they

give his wig, so as to almost incline him to take the advice of his brother performers and "die over again."

"I say!" cries Larkins, "won't the play go off, that's all; but don't any of you get any of your abominable hooks near my wig again!"

The Jew, Larkins, commences by "wasting" the wealth of Antonio, instead of "scattering" it, and Charley is dodging behind him adorning his legs with pins.

Now it is a common thing to see these handy little articles placed in a cushion; but to see a man calmly gesticulate and carry on a conversation whilst an imp is sticking pin after pin into his flesh, or what an observer supposes to be such; is, to say the least of it, singular. So the spectators look at one another and at last begin to roll about with laughter.

Larkins suddenly turns round; but Charley is bolt upright and looking to see what all the laughter is about, and as John has received one enemy clean into his flesh, he turns aside and unfortunately rubs his swollen calves right to the front of his legs.

"Oh! this is dreadful," says Larkins;" but, ever valiant, he pushes on with the dialogue, and in an evil moment bends his head forwards as if to consider some knotty point when, pull! pull! and tug! tug! come with such violence that, there is no help for it, he unties his wig and lets it go.

"If you please, sir," bawls a boy in at the door, "your mother wants you, and she says if you're not out in a minute she'll be in after you!"



Alas! poor Larkins! he knows his parents' aversion to such a place as he is in and the goodness of both their words; so he rushes off in a great hurry and puts his rags off and his own clothes on and goes out into the street to find all his friends awaiting him and asking him if he'll drink lemonade or ginger beer. And for the moment he is very angered, but when they tell him a few things they have noticed in the place—he is pacified—and what is more it is the last of his Amateur Acting.



“MANHOOD.”

YEARS had rolled enough to bring Larkins to manhood's estate; but not to make him alter his determination to be an actor. In fact, he had always said such he would be. No thing could convince him that he was unfitted well as not fitted for one, no, not even being told that he was altogether of the Manger's ugly cut style; and not comic; stupid, but not humorous. After this, who will wonder that John is traversing Bow Street, or that Ted, having promised to accompany old Stupid, is awaiting information respecting the price of a "shape!"

"Six shillings to the same number of pounds," answers the man, "where shall I stop?"

The speaker's business is great. People move constantly in and out, and assistants come to him for orders. Women are sewing on spangles, an elderly man is poring over some huge books, and two young men are selecting wardrobes for theatres. One's impression is that the man can clothe the good people of St. James's, and afterwards adorn the sinners of the New Cut. But all this appears to be trade of a sort, and done in a manner, for the proprietor's sleeves are "tucked up until to the elbows," as we should have it through the French, a pot of beer garnishes the desk and the face costumé looks anxious. In little, the customers are like the goods, of many hues, derived from many sources, and requiring much skill to keep together. Good keeps the man in kindly remembrance, and as he dealt with him let all outsiders cry "amen."

The theatrical outfitter dives here and there, and quickly forms a little heap to which he adds a sword and a sash, and giving the lot a kick he mentions the price. Not many pounds, but a seemingly large amount for such an apparent mound of rubbish. "You'll find all there, shoes, boots, sandals, caps, gauntlets, shape, trunks, tights, and the rest. If the money's too much, I'll kick anything away and price the remainder."

The young man takes a pasteboard cap covered with faded

velvet and asks if such a head ornament (?) would be allowed on a good London stage?

"When the gas is on there is not a thing in the heap that is not good enough," and the man bends over the things, as saying "come, quick, yes or no?"

"Do the interesting rags up; here's the money."

"Ah! many like you I've seen go off with money and properties and come back with sore and almost bare feet."

"I'm different," laughs his customer.

"Of course, you'll be a gun, you think so at starting or, naturally, you wouldn't start at all."

The man counts upon his fingers, as notching off the difficulties, and goes on, "no line so hard to rise in. Envy immense against you. Ignorance in front and behind the curtain. Suspicion enormous. Two years at utility, three or four at walking gentleman, then the juvenile, and next,—but very few get farther than the juvenile or heavy, the whole summed up by half the year not sure of a month's work."

"I can get out of it when I like," says Good, stoutly, half wishing at the same time that Larkins had not been such a fool.

"If the excitement of the life don't unfit you for everything else."

"Well, you're a nice one to sell theatrical toggery, you are,"

"Possibly, but should you think better of it I'll return you your money for these things. I was a would-be Hamlet myself once. We've all been great theatrical people in this region of Bow Street. Ah! nothing so soon works a cure as the want of a beef steak."

"A friend of mine is buying bargains of a Jew in the court at the back of the theatre," slyly remarks the young cynic.

"I know, he warehouses goods for ten shillings, and the pawn-broker writes twenty on the ticket. They know how to manage it."

At this moment there enters the shop a tall, poverty dressed, youth, the son of a popular actor, reputed to be earning large sums of money.

"Father says you're to send the things down at once to the theatre."

"Tell your father I shall do nothing of the sort unless I get the money."

The boy is evidently in training for villains. Finding the man obdurate he produces a sovereign and says; "father has sent you this off."

"And tell him," quietly rejoins the man, coolly pocketing the coin, "to send the rest if he wants the things."

Good slightly coughs as the discomfited leaves the shop. A

dramatic fly has evidently stuck in his throat. And for a moment he thinks of the long journey, very frequently the expense of two homes, months of no work, standing out for parts and of the other hosts that drain the actor's purse and lastly of a certain comfortable stool in a stock broker's office now joggled by some one else from ten, a.m., to half-past four, p.m. He quits the shop and repairs to



Larkins, who is with the Jew. He cannot help regarding the pair with interest mingled with wonder. The man bears less of the marks of his race than any he has ever seen. His face has been wondrously handsome and is still lit with strangely brilliant black eyes. With his back bent and knees shaking, and tottering steps, trembling hands and lurid, unearthly bright eye, Good feels chilly

as he looks upon him. His fingers are waxen looking, with swollen veins, and nails like claws. When he speaks in his nervous, sharp way, and hoarse whisper-like tone, he is like the figure of death bidding the beholder to the charnel house. A start, a sudden word, a shriek, may send him raving to a mad house. He is neither alive nor awake as most of us are who live and keep eyes open, nor does he ever sleep as we, who closing eyes, forget. Poor soul, poor man, the God of his Abraham shelter him lovingly after the darkness of life, for his sufferings are great. What the poor reasonless suffer none can surmise. He takes opium enough each day of his life to kill any ordinary man. In a dirty court, and in the dirtiest of all its houses, up its foul stairs and in one of its back rooms, with food, bed, cupboard, coal, heaps of rags and papers and filth, the three, having left the pawnbroker's, are situate. The young men are smoking cigars, none of the mildest, and yet the stench of the place is almost unbearable.

"How can you expect to be well in such a place as this?" asks Larkins, holding his nose and otherwise expressing extreme disgust.

The Jew raises his head, looks at Good and speaks, Larkins is not for his notice.

"I cannot be well here but my bread is here, that is, my wife's bread, and my opium and brandy."



He speaks as we speak when under the influence of strong passion, passion stifled, passion that unchecked will bring death, and the suffering one still clings to life, who knows, perhaps to hope? He looks round the horrid place, shudders and asks Larkins to rout out the things till his wife comes in, for he can neither stoop nor bend his head to the ground. The wife enters, slattern, sottish, dirty, and dragging herself along. Her age cannot exceed forty. A leer is on her face the

moment her eye takes in the youth and comeliness of Good. Still, he should not judge so hastily and never so harshly. For

twelve years her husband has been an invalid for her to quiet and nurse and bear with. Somewhat scornfully she looks at the young man, as she mutters; "you'll look milder by-and-bye, when you've had the starch taken out of you in holes of country theatres, and maybe, not so hard upon dirt and poverty."

Larkins needs neither her nor Good, his soul is among those precious things, the tights and spangles.

"My best things, such as you'll mostly want, are in the bag, so get them out," says the Jew.

"You see," whispers Larkins to his friend, "he doesn't come any nonsense with me?"

"It's no use talking now," returns Good in the same tone, "you should have gone to a respectable tradesman as I told you."

Larkins found business for his finger to his nose and said his friend would "see."

"You'll be remarkably old before 'you' do," was the reply.

"Never mind," says Larkins, "John's the boy for 'em!"

"If it were not that it would make him worse," says Good, aside, "I should like to drive one hard bargain with him."

"Oh! as it is, Ted, I'm not going to let him off, I can tell you." So you see Larkins has no bowels. The pawnbroker has let the things out on bail in the hope that Larkins, or, as Good calls him, old Spooney, will purchase them.

As he turns the queer assortment out the customer is by no means sparing in the use of such words as "muck, rubbish, and rags." The woman turns her head every now and then and passes her hand across her mouth, a sign to Ted that she has already begun to trade upon the "sell."

"Now," cries Larkins, frowning very much and flourishing a note book and pencil, "you shall name a price, the lowest price, mind, I shan't bate you, and I'll take a note of what's agreed for each article, but I warn you, the moment you open your mouth to tell lies, or too wide, particularly too wide, I go."

The Jew commences upon a pair of black silk trunks, in good condition and cheap at twelve shillings.

"Hem!" cries Larkins, in a manner that combined with the wry look upon his face goes for "what rubbish! how much?"

The Jew's price, for the first article, is always his trial divisor for a sum exceedingly difficult to work, seeing he is expected to sell nothing but bargains. If you know the value of an article trade with a Jew, he will no more think of hugging a bargain than of

refusing to turn a penny. He takes the trunks in his hands and squeezes them into the compass of an orange.

"No moth-holes, good, very good for second hand, cost Pounds when new, twelve shillings."



"Pish!" sneers Larkins, "any stuff will get close and jump up if you press it and then let it go, and twelve bob for 'em, too, second-hand. Why they're dear as reg'lar bags."

"Which is saying," remarks the Jew, mildly, that out of the way garments made of most expensive materials are as dear as ordinary trowsers."

"Seven," cries Larkins, shortly. Being very ill, the Jew is content to cheat quietly, so he only says, "very well; but you do wrong, look you."

"I ought to divide all your sums by four."

"You ought to go into the old man's line," is the indifferent retort.

"Why?"

"You are 'so' bitter."

As Ted quietly laughs, and the Jew composedly goes on arranging the properties, Larkins wishes he had not been complimented. Still, he lives in hopes of something turning up before the sale has finished to discomfit the enemy. He has got a nibble. The Jew makes a feint of covering something.

"Out with it," cries Larkins.

"Excuse me," says the Jew, "they'll not suit you."

"We'll see about that," says John, proudly, and he triumphantly

holds up to Ted's gaze a showy pair of trunks that are badly disguised livery.

"Toss 'em in at the same price."

"You'll not require them."

"Tell you I will have 'em," cries the buyer, with a good but unconscious manner of Goldfinch.

And he does, at a price which doubly puts the Jew right respecting the former pair.

"The Jew wins," Ted says to himself, and he leaves Larkins to be thoroughly done.

"For," he mutters, softly, "if fools would only listen to their folly they would be fools no longer."



John has been advised to buy only useful things, and not many of them; but whenever did counsel benefit a Larkins? He buys heaps of things that will come in "handy," one being an Admiral's hat, which the Jew says will be useful in Claude Melnotte, and another, a soldier's coat for "the deserter," a piece the seller calls, as he fancies, into existence for the occasion. And thus, regardless of cost, equips

Larkins himself for the thorny and slippery paths of the drama.

An agent no sooner catches sight of his confiding countenance than he charges him a guinea, instead of the legal fleecing of half-a-crown. Ted is asked for a similar sum; but he blandly smiles and tenders the usual.

"A mistake," simpers the pimply-faced man.

"No," is the unabashed rejoinder, "two shillings and," he looks very meaningfully as he speaks, "in your expressive diction, —a "kick." And the young gentleman goes through a series of hand rubbing and bowing, which he calls the Bishop of London and a member of the Royal Family at a foundation stone affair. The business of the agency is transacted within an inner office. In the outer one there are a piano, bills of performances, dramatic

prints, dusty cocoa nut matting, two rickety chairs, and a rout seat. Indeed, the general appearance is such that Ted, after much study, gives it as his opinion that the dirty windows are the



“base” reliefs. But, “the people, ah! the people,” who are waiting, and those who keep entering are strange, suggestive and interesting. There is a something about the men which gives the impression at first sight that they have been all machined by one patent, so much alike are they. Is it because they all paint and shave? About many there hangs the jaded appearance of the eye, that in the country actor betokens hard study, and in the town one, perhaps, something worse.

One thing is certain, no other class could make an appearance so respectable upon means so slender. For the “stars” and the regularly engaged lucky few, what need they at agents’ offices? Such cannot be recognised as



players; for as gentlemen are the same all the world over; so competency generally sits outwardly upon all alike.

Here appears the showily dressed girl trusting in the applause her good looks have won her at the private theatres and literary Institutes, and in that of her voice as a singer at private parties, for success on the boards, where charms without talent are simply a dangerous drug, and a fine voice, without years of patient study, useless.

Her head is impudently tossed towards young men whom she at once stamps as "utility." True, she will have to begin as such; but then she will soon create a stir, &c., and perhaps receive an offer from a nobleman or a manager. Here, too, is the bull-necked manager, with almost glance avoiding eye, thoroughly destitute of education, with great natural appreciation for that which is good, earthy and sensual, who has learnt much from his buffets with the world in fighting from a show at a fair to the head of a London Theatre. His sneer or shrug at a first performance is as damnatory as the cloven foot of the bitterest critic. What he likes the public likes, and only that he pays for. Contrasted with him is the fashionably attired manager who speaks softly with polished manner to the poorest applicant, but who yet is terrible to the needy and anxious as he of the bull-neck and prize-fighter hand. For there comes over his face the abstracted expression, as the man out of engagement pleads, that tells of the many, many times the same sort of tale has sounded before. The eagerness manifested by most of the would-be-engaged brings to mind an old pamphlet in which occurs from the diary of an actor:—"Met Mr. —, paid great attention to him. N.B.—More than half suspect he's a manager."

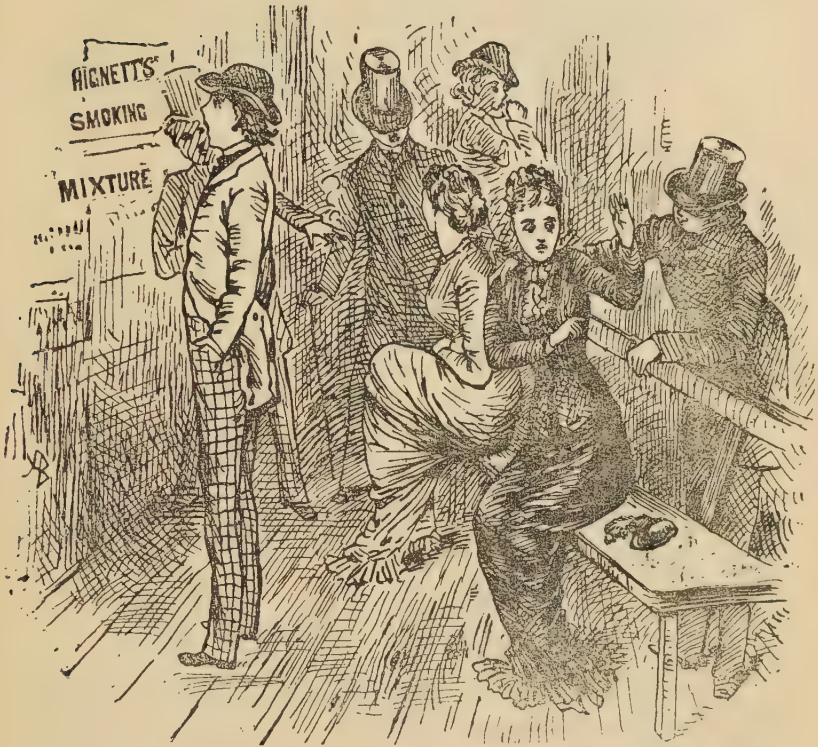
Not kindly do these keen eyes fall upon flippant Miss, for the owner remembers how many times he has had to ring the curtain down upon similar dolls. Most curious of all is it to note the pale faced, jaded looking old young men, and the jaunty, spruce young looking old men. The really smart and lively are, naturally, the unplucked by the agent or the fortunate of a month or two. The few out of some hundreds who, having dropped into a sort of theatrical honeymoon by reason of confiding dispositions, anticipate no managerial, or out of engagement, jars in the future.

Ted, to use his own art expression, is not over particular to a shade, but he certainly opens his eyes at seeing men openly saluting the actresses—are such actresses, or ballet, or supernumerary women?—on the lips.

"Don't," cries one damsel very far gone in chalk and paint, in fact, everything but varnished, not at all regarding the strangers, after a stout gentleman of about fifty has kissed her and whispered something in her ear which causes her to protest.

"I hate you, Fred; you were very well at the theatre last night; but this morning I positively hate you."

From the fact of the stout gentleman smoking the remains of a cigar



in the company of so many distinguished professionals, Ted judges him to be a great gun. Perhaps the proprietor of a performing family and a slasher at two handed combats. And all are so well of.

"You see," says one, wishing it to go no farther, "I won't stay in London, under"—and he whispers "Pounds a week, because in the country I get 'such benefits.'"

Well, he may, but Ted thinks his trowsers are certainly such as the *niggers* wear, and that his whole fit out need be under no apprehension respecting rain. But hear them talk and credit them, and there would be no profession like theirs for banking accounts. It is quite harmless and natural all this. An artist, as hard up as man could be, furnished his bare room by painting costly furniture on the walls. It was all right till you wanted to sit, and then; there you were, you know. So these men lived in anything but great quarters and were given frequently to much fingering of the waistcoat pocket before the bitter was paid for.

"I get," said one to Ted "twelve Pounds a week."



"Do you," coolly remarked our friend "then I shall leave you to pay for what we've had."

"Here, I say," cried the man, but Ted was on his way, long before the alarm sounded, to another and remoter quarter of the town.

After explaining their views, and those of John's are extensive, the friends are requested to "call to-morrow." To "look in" any time they're passing. Ted soon understands the peculiar scent of the snuff manufactured at the establishment for

his titillation, and expresses himself upon the subject in this John-sonian manner.

As the publisher's clerk "declines with thanks" the gratuitous offerings of a gushing public; so the theatrical agent "calls to-morrow" *his* clients.





“IN IT.”



ON the third morning of his application at the agent's office, Ted receives the usual, but by no means does the usual. On the contrary, he closes the door of the inner office and seats himself in front of his enemy. He has been offered, it is true, the choice out of two neat little things, in nice little shops, two hundred miles off, but he has generously left them to other and more deserving candidates. Larkins is ready to accept either offer, for, indeed, he has drank so much beer and talked so much about popular actors that he begins to think success will greet him anywhere.

“Your legs are long,” says his merciless friend, “distance is of no object to you but it is to me.” Our “mutual friend” has so treated the agent's agent, that, as Ted says, “how ‘can’ he expect to be got off?” In fact, foolish John has acted like the publican who treats the painters to get them to finish quickly. And on this particular morning so much drink has been indulged in, that the agent-pen goes admonishingly up and down in front of Ted, as if keeping time to music which proclaims to a virtuous world that the client is tipsy.

Ted is vicious.

“No more to-morrow gammon, my abstemious friend; here's half-a-sovereign for you if you tell me the truth and do what I want. If you deceive me or refuse, I'll walk into you. So be quick, you can't stand without bending, and if you bend the liquor will spill; so sit still. I suppose you've got what you could out

of us and as we've never been on the boards no one will be bothered



with us save the "far over hill and dale," chaps who think to get us too far away from town for returning, and then to drudge us for crust money?"

The agent's mouthpiece says "hush" and by many signs indicates that the questioner is not like Larkins. A very fortunate thing for Ted that the man is not sober, for, divested of winks, sottish gutturals, and swayings to and fro, he learns that his suspicions are well founded.

Getting the man a little bit right, he asks him if a letter of recommendation from a celebrated actor, giving a guarantee of good education and elocution, would be of any use? The name mentioned is the highest in the profession, and the man's eyes exhibit something like intelligence as he answers; "of great use."

So think all you children smitten with things which looking prettiest and easiest, are hardest to attain and least attractive when mastered, before you choose an art profession; that few can be made artists but that each of the few must drudge to succeed.

"Yet," mumbles the fuddled man, "you want to be together, and what manager will ever take his legs?"

"It was to be near him that first put it into my head to come here."

"Those legs, those legs, they walk the stage, they'll walk houses out."

"Hang it, man, they'll do for 'comedy.'"

"If comedy, young man, were located in the legs, there are lots of actors who'd be funny enough, especially on treasury days; no, comedy's here," and the man taps his addled pate.

Larkins is very melancholy when he is made acquainted with the unwelcome tidings, but full is he, notwithstanding, of a man who wants two, nice, gentlemanly young men, with a little capital, for tragedy and comedy. In vain are Larkins's persuasions, his friend will hear of no shut up or open bedsteadizing theatrical speculation.

But balm comes at least once to sucking actors if they will but persevere, regardless of the fate of that hard facted Frenchman's horse; and so one fine morning, when it hasn't rained in London for full two days, Ted is hastily summoned to the agent's office to see one of those rare characters of managers whose money is sure. The great man has arrived in his trap, and the agent, not the agent's agent this time, fancies Ted is not sufficiently impressed. Unfortunately, or fortunately, our young gentleman has been to a party over night and, not having reached home till morning, it is with anything but feelings of gratitude that he reaches the office

by eleven in obedience to a notice received at ten. This manager has in his appearance a little of the jockey, a touch of the jew, something of the gentleman, and a great deal of the theatre. Humanity frequently in want of the bare necessities of life rejoices in tacking superfluities on to something of its kind. Hence it is whispered that this man keeps his hounds, that he is an important man in his county and,—a perfect gentleman.

"Once, sir, they tried to keep him from the county ball, but he came and shewed a paper, sir, and it was all up with them."

Ted's eyes are very bright, his manners easy, and his dress fashionable and neat, therefore this manager is somewhat politer than usual. Men and women engaged at a theatre are "people." The young gentleman is asked if he knows French and German, sing from music, of course he can, as for fencing and dancing, if not thoroughly well up in these, he would not think of the stage. Thus the manager.

The letter of recommendation is read and the manager is asked if many of his company can do such things.

"I have three classical men in my company, I seldom engage any but thoroughly educated men, ignorant men, never. May I ask your motive for entering upon such a precarious and hard life? I have three sons and unless they were specially gifted this way, and even then it would be only a toss up as to success or failure, I would sooner apprentice them to the boot trade?"

Ted's answer causes the manager to smile; but as youth is positive in its determination experience yields an unwilling assent. The manager hears him read and compliments him, but observes that he has heard dozens read as well and yet muddle "my lord, a letter," upon the stage.

"And about salary?"

And now, great man as he is, his tone becomes softened, and he moves and looks out upon his trap, dealing his man a side wind by remarking that, doubtless, what would be offered would not suit him. His tone has softened and he sinks into mere mortality.

"That I leave to you," is the answer.

"I may be wrong," remarks the manager, gently and half turning round, "but haven't you a slight weakness in your throat?"

"No, no weakness at all, I've been up all night at a party and having been rather too thirsty am naturally somewhat dry in the throat now."

The moment Ted so speaks the agent groans and the manager

becomes solemn and his time short. Smile as Ted may, on the wrong side of his face, and wonder at the manager of a theatre being alarmed at engaging a man who has been up all night pleasuring, the great man is down stairs and in his trap cutting off to his hotel.

The agent says that somebody is a "cake" and that the same somebody has "bottled" it, and that whilst a few of the public's actors may be dissipated no manager's one can, especially in the country.

It is settled that Ted shall play one night for the benefit of a man, a late manager, whom drunken and dishonest ways have brought to want. Our friend fancies he likes acting, but he is ashamed of himself and bag when outside the little theatre in Rochester. No one should or need be ashamed of any calling that's honest, still less of one pleasant to him, and which affords harmless amusement to others. The theatre is closed and the vagabond fellow, whom the agent and Ted have come to serve, having obtained all the money he could for tickets, is off. It is a bitter night, sleety and windy, and they are soaked to their skins. After a great deal of trouble and some two miles walk they find his house. Lights are visible and the agent says the people within are at tea. They knock and wait, at last the door is roughly opened and they are scarcely looked at the time their business is told.

"Oh! it's just like my father and you were fools to come, you know that!" and the door is slammed to in their faces.

"What is she?" asks Ted, savagely.

"Half an actress, that is, she plays with the officers."

The next day the client and agent are in Bow street by appointment.

"There is nothing doing at present, Good, and the best thing you can do is to join just such a vagabond as we went to serve last night. Play with him for a month and I'll guarantee you something at a respectable theatre."

"Will the fellow you speak of take me?"

"Yes, anybody, he's on his last legs and has only two more counties open. When they're done up he's 'settled' for life."

"I suppose it will be easy enough to act with him?"

"Which do you think easier, to act in a well regulated theatre where the parts are well learned and everything ready for use, or in a place managed by a rascal with a heap of rags for a wardrobe, where to get through a piece at all, much less to act it well, experienced hands are required?"

The business arrangements are completed, and Ted and Larkins are on Waterloo Bridge.

"Kneel down," exclaims John, solemnly, "and let me bless you!"

And to the astonishment of the passers by Ted is blessed with many references to a "yonder moon" and a "Jaffier" and a "Pierre" and a "Hamlet" and a "Ghost." A few minutes after which process they are upon the Railway platform.

"In case you should be foolish enough to follow me, Larkins, the agent has cautioned the manager, so don't do anything rash, old fellow, I shall soon see the way clear and then I'll send for you."

"They'd bleed him to his flannel shirt" the young man thinks, as the train starts. And then he laughs at the idea of anybody trying to perform a similar operation upon himself. Arrived at his destination he walks through a few ill built alleys into the main street and down a turning—and then he sees the theatre. The poorest show in London bears more signs of life than this. If anything, the theatre part of the street is darker than any other, whilst the theatre itself bears resemblance to nothing but a dirty bricked workhouse; or another country theatre.

"Like crowded ship life on the broad ocean," mutters Ted, "these country towns, very nice and all that but containing holes bad as the great cities."

A dark wall, an open door and a closed one, the second the stage one, no one moving about the place, are the chief points of notice. He may recite a soliloquy without attracting other attention than that of a few ragged urchins gathered round the open door.

"Un 'll let 'ee in tell'ee" says one of the young roughs, "vor arve a counse ov bakker or a penny. Un let I in last night vor zum bakker I copped from feyther!"

The speaker is a rough headed boy of about twelve with the strong build that shews him the hardy one who has lived through privations that yearly kill, perhaps, ten out of every twelve born as he. The boys get in and there is seen at the door a rough man shaking his head and making those other signs that characterise a man engaged in the process of bewailing his fate.

"Gud help me! it's a horrible death bed it will be with me!"

His age is about sixty, his height, as near as possible, five feet seven, his shoulders broad and his whole appearance muscular and stout. He has on an old, thick overcoat, a black handkerchief twisted rather than tied round his throat, neither shirt nor collar, a

furred travelling cap with the lapels drawn over his ears, the whole supported by very thick boots.

The remark just fallen from him is the truest key to his character.

Ever trying to drive off thoughts of the devil the time he readily takes advantage of him and all his works.

His face is turned full towards Ted and there are features revealed that possessed by an honest man would be handsome.

The teeth are white and regular, the eyes full, and the face with scarcely a wrinkle. As he catches sight of Ted there comes an instantaneous smile upon his face that far from lighting the building obscures it, for the shifting look of the man unfits it for any such sunshine. In his mind, Ted is a young gentleman who wants to go "behind." And so the manager bows, and is about to anticipate, as he thinks his customer's wishes, when the newly arrived actor mentions his name and business.

"For" he says "I presume you are the manager?"

"That misfortune's my own," answers the man and he washes his hands with "invisible soap" and is somewhat surprised but not a bit pleased at his new actor; who is thoroughly "at home" and evidently too far gone in the enigma called "life" for the operation of skinning. Still, the young man is very well dressed and there may be a chance. "It's awfully cold here without a drop of anything to drink to warm one or the means to get it. This is what it is to be a manager. You pay when you haven't got it, and till you haven't a pinny, and thin ye may stand shivering on a cold night while your people have a good fire. Don't ever be a manager, young man; Ah! Gud help me!" and the manager's arms are high in the air. His scent is very acute so he sniffs of the smoke Ted is puffing from his meerscham and says "Is it bird's eye you're smoking?"

"No, it's *Hignett's* mixture given me by a dear friend who made me promise to smoke every bit of it myself."

"And it's a very suitable person he has given it to," growls the manager, savagely.

"We'll walk to the dressing room and introduce you to the company," says Mr. Gruntley Flayandstarveye.

"There is no need for any one to mind the admission door, they don't want half-price, it's no price at all the devils want."

A knock at the door per Gruntley's boots, and "Who the—— is that wanting to let the cold air in?"

"Open the door, my lad," says Gruntley, and, taking one step

downwards, they are within the dressing room. A white-washed, saw-dusted shed having the appearance of an unused slaughter house. There are two boards propped upon tubs, the contrivance representing dressers, a small fire place and a water can. The whole extent about ten feet by six, and in the farther corner a heap of rags or the wardrobe.

"A pretty den this," grumbles a man, "not a bit of fire and the weather freezing, I've no more pence for firing."

"Arrah!" quoth the manager, "don't grumble, didn't I get the boy to crib you some nice clean sawdust to make you comfortable?"

The man who has spoken stands opposite a portion of one of the shelves on which is a small box that contains partitions in which are paint, chalk, soap, a comb and a looking glass. Opposite each



such box is chalked the owner's name. There is but one short form, and, blue though the man's nose is from the severe cold, Ted

has the novelty of beholding him convert himself in a very few minutes from a lover to a benevolent-looking elderly gentleman, or into one as benevolent as, under the circumstances, can be expected. There enters a tall, stout man of about thirty-five years of age, who, however he may be like the others in skill, yet bears marks of very different means inasmuch as his appearance proclaims "well fed and clad."

"Holloa!" cries he roughly to Gruntley, the while he sends an angry glance towards Ted, "cut this, I'll not have it here, it's enough to have it behind; I tell you I'll pitch you and any fellow you bring here out by the neck."

"This is Mr. Good," says Gruntley.

"Oh!" exclaims the other coolly to Ted "then you might have made your appearance earlier, that's all."

And by the time the leading man has so spoken the first piece is over and the group numbers seven.

"Now, gentleman," cries Ted, "I've a shilling or two left for the purpose, pray let me have the pleasure of drinking your healths?"

"Oh! nonsense" and "quite unnecessary" from all save the tall man, who proceeds with the changing of his dress. The treat settles itself into the form of rum. The tall man takes his pipe from his mouth and says Ted had better keep his money for his own guts.

"Very pleasant introduction" quietly observes one man, which observation becomes echoed by the others. And the interview assumes quite a friendly aspect. The tall man is dressed in his street clothes and Ted cannot help admiring the quickness displayed in his "change" and the improvement in his appearance. Side by him stands a man of fifty or sixty years of age, good looking and bearing strong marks of having enjoyed and wasted life. The least prepossessing of the group is the man who said "very pleasant introduction."

He is between fifty and sixty, though at a first glance he looks scarcely forty. His manners are those of a vulgar woman trying to appear well bred; certain he neither speaks nor moves as a man. One's grandmamma had styled him "Miss Nancy." He skips rather than walks, and moves his hands in front of him by a motion of the wrists. As in every stage of life and in every place nature appears never better pleased than in contrast; this oddity seems the very antithesis to an intellectual looking little man by his side.

A little man, exceedingly pale and delicate, with dark, straight hair falling nearly upon his shoulders and giving pathos to his melancholy aspect. His features are cut fine as from a sculptor's chisel and lit by an open, childlike gray eye that in more than brilliancy bespeaks the unquiet mind, or disease that flatters and mocks as it destroys. May! past or never known: the yellow leaf not to be. The knowledge bringing no repining for itself for the eyes speak longing for rest and that—the end of its breath.

It does not wish for death, life never does that for two hours together, but at times it "abides" without any look forward.

"I never thought to meet two like these" thinks Ted.

Ah! where does not the sun shine at times?





“THE COMPANY.”

OF the other male members of the company one is a bloated, drunken man, with a tread as if the soles of his feet had been poulticed, and yet corruption as he is he has held a good position in society and now, when not under the influence of drink, he can go through wonderful feats of memory and shew marks of a high education. Dates of any kind he can run through, backwards or forwards. Start him anywhere, in the midst or in any part of an era, he can rattle on, and always correctly. If any leading actor annoys him, he contrives to get some choice part in the play and hum-drum away as usual at rehearsal and take the audience by storm at night. Other things being equal, his motto is to do as little as possible for money. And he so acts up to his doctrine that long as he has money he does no work. Two of his accomplishments are swearing in Greek and translating disgusting anecdotes from two European languages. But worse, ah! worse than all, as in most such men, there is mockery for everything pure, for everything holy. And with the power of mere intellect the effect is trebly pernicious. What can some poor soul do though feeling itself right against his sharpened bitterness? True, conviction comes as it ever does with reflection and solitude; but in the gatherings of men the laugh is his. Times and times has he been lifted from the gutters only to return to them. To two of the company he is civil; the rest fear and detest him. The tall man will answer his gall with blows, with the little man he never interferes.

The tall man is “Burly” the Nancy gentleman “Skip” and the other old man “Mostgone.”

Burly is not included in the general company—he is “starring.” He has played the lead in the first piece and is going off to smoke a pipe in the largest public-house in the town to lay eggs for his benefit.

"And here" thinks Ted "is a giant hatched in a booth and taught to roar in a barn, who'll never be great, but who, looking at his starting point, has made progress great as many tottering in lawn."

Burly is ready to depart and Skip is engaged in the difficult task of trying to make a very old hat look like a new one for the farce. Burly loudly laughs at him, shakes his head up and down, winks at Ted, and says "a nice lot you've got among," and then is off. Like most artists whose works are weak, Skip's colouring is strong, so strong that his words have to be greatly diluted.



"The puppy!" this is Skip's exclamation, accompanied by a long pause between the words, a jerk of his legs and a sudden movement of his head and nose in the direction of the ceiling. His hat is in his left hand and having previously warmed it over the gas he gently administers oil to its surface, as one might be supposed to dress the wounds of a partially burnt baby. Nothing but the recollection of having seen such a creature can give any idea of the last toss of his head and turn of his body at the final sound of his sentences, when enraged. It

may be compared to the noise made by two boys when, with noses pointed and bodies bent they say "Er!" in the process known as "crowing."

"We could do just as well without him" says Skip.

"And have more money for ourselves," adds Mostgone.

"He's young," sneers the sot "experience like yours is not to be gained in a day; why I've been at it twelve years and don't know my profession yet."

"You do!" cry Skip and Mostgone, the first rubbing away very carefully at his hat, and the second giving a sniff of suspicion. "Well, granting part to be true, try all I know, eat little, never drink, rise early, I'm only a sucking actor and it will be many, many years before I get on though I *have* got a gentlemanly appearance and am careful with my aspirates."

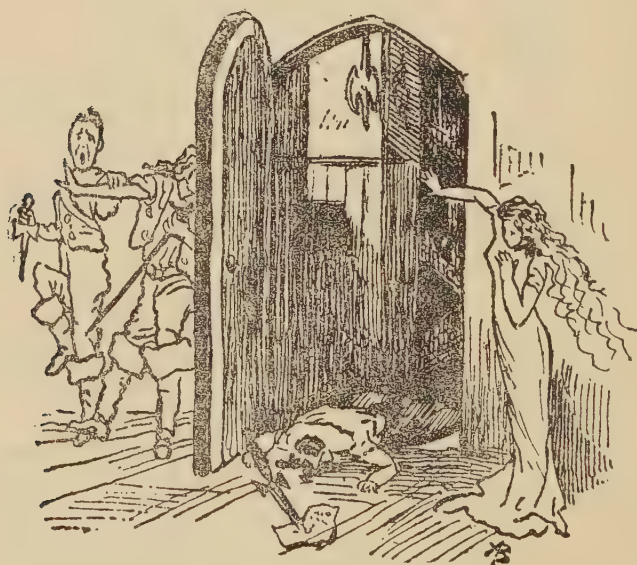
Ted bites his lips; but it is not otherwise evident that he takes any notice; Mostgone and Skip laugh.

"Why even now, though when it suits me, I can bring a house down, I can't for the life of me act as either of you two."

"Nonsense, nonsense," exclaim they, looking uncomfortably at one another.

"Well, if I could, gentlemen of sheds and paint, I'd study two fine tragedy parts and make burlesque fame and fortune together. Let's see, it's the farce next. Ah! I know, the gay lover, that is, two skips, three nose jerks and constant smacking of slices of toast between the hands to each sentence. And the father, the old game, of course, stolen tag ends and bob tails of Sir Anthony and all the other Absolutes."

What part old gall has to perform Ted does not know, but by what appears to be simply altering the position of his coat collar, tying a sash round his waist, slipping a pair of oil-skin leggings over his boots and chalking and then colouring his face with a little vermillion, he makes up the traditional, some, naval-officer, in far better style and in about one-third of the time that the others take for their changes.



One thing strikes him as being most remarkable and that is the extraordinary manner in which this man takes a piece of common white writing paper and, in about almost as little time as it takes to speak of it, fold it, and put it on as collar and cuffs. Many times afterwards when hard pushed to appear respectable does Ted make

paper collars, and buy paper collars to button round his wristbands as cuffs, and see others make them, but never one as this man. The street or the country road never troubles them, it is the boards; the true actor will go without bread to dress for his work.

Properties can this man make for the stage out of almost anything. He has made a set of chessmen out of acorns and lucifer matches and has coloured and finished them so beautifully that a great actress is proud to use them in the "Tempest."

An old tunic in his hands, with a few bits of lace and velvet, looks a regal dress on the stage. He can make or mend a wig, skin and re-cover a hat, make coats and breeches and do anything he likes when he tries, though it is in keeping with his character seldom to try anything but drink.

This sot mounts the rough steps that lead to the stage and, there being no fire in the green room, he walks up and down by the wings smoking his pipe and cursing at the cold. Gruntley is by his side with many protestations of standing something warm after the farce; but the man merely looks at the steps and says that the manager had better get off. And as Gruntley is addressed by the name of "old thief" he puts half-a-crown into the actor's hand and then makes his exit, looking round in a furtive manner for fear any one should catch him in the act; making as he goes numerous actions to represent a man without a penny in the world, having all the will to give, broken hearted at being compelled to say "Gud help him he couldn't" and "impassible."

"If it were not for my poor children I should do that man a mischief; I'm certain I should," says Skip, in reference to the sot, and he moves his eye brows up and down as he does in tragedy and clenches his hands and pumps his chest to typify emotion!

"Well" cries Mostgone," swaying himself from side to side, having different views of the heavy, and speaking in the tone of a man determined to study the feelings of others no longer, "I *have* considered Mrs. Mostgone's happiness in this; now I'll wait no more!"

Skip has taken the rum bottle in his hand under the idea that there is a drop left; but there is not.

"I saw him drain it out" says Mostgone, witheringly "and it's a wonder that he didn't take the bottle back and get something for what's left on it."

And as the sot has not done so, Skip and Mostgone do. "Come up and see the ladies" says Mostgone to Ted. It is bit-

terly cold upon the stage, for added to the severity of the weather the walls and roof have holes that let in the air. Warmly clad as he is, Ted is forced to keep himself moving.

A pretty little woman is holding her foot out for the services of an unwholesome looking girl. When this woman speaks it is evident she is educated.

Her eyes are very bright and only blemished by the indifferent look that hardship so frequently creates.

"Mrs. Mostgone" says her husband. The lady makes a graceful curtsy and Ted bows.



"My daughter" says Skip, as the "young lady" of the company comes upon the stage and runs playfully towards her father. So playfully and prettily; like a fluttering bird, seeking its nest. She has a childish pout upon her lips that says "Go away, naughty man, little girl wouldn't look at you if papa were not here!"

Tall, fresh coloured, fair; really good looking, well shaped, and, with better things in her mind, she would be pretty.

For all her assumption of bread and butter days she is full two and twenty. Her greatest

drawback to a proper ease consists in the jerky action given to her hands and arms; move how she will they always seem to be in the way. When introduced to Ted she smiles and daintily gives him the tips of two of her fingers to shake, and no matter how smart or dull a thing is said, whenever any one looks at her, she always gives the same kind of smile. Were Ted the leading man or one known to be rich he feels sure the lady would be smitten with him.

When Skip and Ted move aside it is mentioned in a whisper "how good a daughter" and "what a treasure she is to her father," when the truth is that she makes him fetch everything, mend his own clothes; whilst she indulges in all those habits that the kind of women have, from a very early age, whose lax virtue and laziness prompt them to be turned into wicked dolls. There

is another woman, odd looking but never ill looking, for the expression of her features changes with her thoughts, who is promising her little girl, with a kiss and a whisper, the food she almost despairs of procuring. The food that is to be obtained after the farce for her and her little brother at home if she and her husband, the little man, go without. The little man whose pipe some wholesale economist would put out to provide mutton chops and port wine for his famishing children. And Ted is at first, and then not at all, surprised to find himself growing better and kinder towards his fellows.

So he thinks of the time when the law framers and lights of the Parisian Church applauded and worshipped the great French actors and actresses when living, and refused them decent burial when dead.

Of the myriads of religious sects that will not encourage "the devil and all his works" by sitting in a country theatre; but sneak to London to wallow in the forbidden sin,—for sin is all that which we honestly believe to be wrong.

Man is God's noblest work and the best and brightest man, the noblest, and if present, would Abraham, Isaac or Jacob refuse to sit and hear the words of the man, Shakespeare? If we must have change is not a good play pure to most of the stuff we designate "amusement?"

The performance is over, audience gone, and actors, actresses, musicians, carpenters, bill stickers, right down to the boy from the public-house who has trusted the manager with that "only one Shilling's worth," to the man from the gas company and the landlady of theatre, in front of the door, waiting for Mr. Gruntley. Night after night have they so waited to waylay him for money, each night determining to "mob" him and work for him no more; but now things are getting ominous.

Preparatory tricks have been put in force, as running and locking himself in his lodgings, sending the night's takings off and declaring that the house had been all paper, clasping hands and affirming with oaths, which would make most shudder, that he has not a penny in the world to get a bit of bread.

He makes tears keep company with agonised sobs, when the theatre proprietor's agent is not present, and says that the landlady has had every farthing for rent, and then when the gas company's agent is absent he shifts all the money to the "kimpiny." And when astonishment is expressed at a week's gas taking all the

receipts he declares the man before him was a rogue who did not pay anything for a season, and that the "kimpiny" would not have put on any gas if he had not paid the back money.

All such tricks have been gone through regularly as letters of the alphabet and there await him dark looks and clenched hands; great fiddles that may break over his head, and brass instruments that may be beaten in his face. And whoever thinks that Mr. Gruntley likes all this, or is ignorant of it, is wrong as he who supposes that the manager will not stand toe to toe and give and take a hammering with any one not greatly wronged by him.

Not the only follower of the nasty Giles Overreach whose sword drops in unrighteous warfare. Mr. Gruntley hides for a moment or two in a dark corner and cries; "Gud help him" and that it is a miserable death he will die, and looking through a chink and seeing that there is no escape, he pulls his hat over his brows and stands before them.

"Now then, ladies and gentlemen, it's no one knows better than myself that ye've been humbugged, but it has been for your good; it has been a good house and sorrow's me if I'll deny it, the money's in my pocket and if ye'll kick the pail over the moment ye've got the milk coming into it, yer must. I've a bespake to-morrow, and it's use this money for all our good I will and pay every soul in the ship. Here's half-a-crown for myself, a pound for the band and a shilling each for you, ye divils of paste and brooms! For my kimpiny, they're leddies and gntlemen and will settle with me privately."

His address is rapid, given with apparent sincerity, and he hands the sums mentioned as he speaks and runs off; Skip and Mostgone wildly after him, and the little man standing still with his head bent to the ground.

A voice by his side, entreaty, not reproach.

"The children cannot live through this night without food!"

Confusion over, the men regret the letting go of Gruntley, still, they will not play again till they have been paid, and for the "divils of paste and brooms," they refresh themselves with twelve pots of beer and then set out to storm the manager's castle.

"He'll only give a policeman a shilling to move you off and to advise you to take out a summons against him" says Ted to the sweepers and stickers, and as the new actor speaks, Gruntley, is at the door of the public house where he lodges and about to rush in.

He is alarmed; for two panting men who have been running

after him are up to him. Turning his head he sees Mostgone and Skip.

"Oh!" cries he, quite relieved, "It's you, is it, and what may be the nature of your business?"

Truly, now they have but caught him to let him loose, they look very foolish.

"Ye great *gal* from the workhouse," cries he to Skip, "with your duck of a daughter that puts away gin like a fish, you want money, do you, I wouldn't give the pair of ye ten shillings a week if I meant paying.

And you, ye miserable, worn out sinner, old Mostgone, I wouldn't give yer a penny. Ah! it's a miserable death you'll die, too, a horrible death, that's a satisfaction; so I'll give a crown between yer, if I would give you two more for the leddies ye'd only spend 'em; so if ye'll go straight home with what ye've got it'll be just the same as giving 'em yer!"

Gruntley is within the house and the two men are looking at one another, and at the half crowns; indeed, they only recover themselves in time to spend one sixpence before their ladies come up, when they make a pretence at consolation by spending a shilling "among them all."

Gruntley spends nightly the earnings of many men in a sort of private room, hence the landlady never believes wicked slanders, nor allows her guest to be interrupted. She lets him in through the back of the house, or secretes him at the top, or in the coal cellar.

The little man is by Gruntley's side, and Gruntley is fumbling in the managerial pocket.

"There! there's five shillings, you're worth your money, and after the bespake I'll pay you up."

The little man takes the money; but still stands quietly by the manager's side.

"There's another half-crown, and you can have a drop of something to drink, to-morrow I'll pay you, for well you know, ye baste, the bespake's all a barney!"

The little man leaves the room, and Burly comes and seats himself by Gruntley's side and smokes and drinks. The manager is willing to spend anything upon his dear Burly; but the tall man will in no way partake of his dishonest gains.

Gruntley has called for his tenth three of rum "hot and swate," when enters the soapy woman with "They're going on so to-night

that they'll come into the bed-rooms if you don't go down to them!"

"Fetch the p'lice to the vagabonds, and tell 'em I don't owe 'em a ha'penny, and that if I do, let 'em summon me."

Burly strikes a blow upon the table that makes the glasses ring.

"Why don't you pay, you old thief? You're on your last legs, two more 'counties and then'"—but as he can find no fitting end Gruntley supplies "the river."

"Fudge! you'll never have insane pluck or active cowardice enough for that, and there's never a workhouse will have you: you'll make acquaintance with a pump and then," adds the man earnestly, "you'll be killed, and, strong and big as I am, I will not hold out a hand to save you."

The old man whines, sobs of his children, his wife, and talks of the necessity for what he does.

"Bump!" goes a heavy sound against a door.

"There!" cries the woman, wringing her hands, "there's one door gone, go down sir, go down like a man, and face 'em!"

Burly still sits, quietly smokes, and takes in the scene with much relish of the old man's perplexity.

"Ye thafe of the world, woman, go down yourself, ye coward, and

scratch 'em, and get the divils out of your house! Is this the way a gintleman's to be treated for honouring your dirty house wit his company?" Feet are heard ascending the stairs, and the old man's face whitens and his eyes roam round the room and he tightens his hands, and draws in his breath; but never thinks of paying. "Sorrow's the world of me ever I was born! Harry, my boy, don't let 'em kill the old man. I'll fight any of 'em till the blood of me is gone; but they're



many to one; don't let 'em kill me!

Hear 'em, my boy, they'll

have the door down in a minute. Gud help me! I never wronged you!"

"Had you done so I'd have throttled you," and the big man opens his massive hand and closes it tightly again. The door is banged open, and a dozen, pale, determined faces look in. "He's in it, of course," cries one of the foremost, pointing to Burly. "No he's not," speaks out the sot who heads them, "he's too much of a man."

The giant in his great strength is possessed, and the intruders seem more alarmed at his cool self possession than at him.

One man walks towards Gruntley. "Gud help me, I haven't a penny that's my own, look here! I haven't a shirt to my back nor sock to the foot of me!" The man is about to lay hold of Gruntley when Burly turns to the landlady and says, "You don't want these men here?"

At the sound of his voice the woman recovers the use of her faculties and cries, "Me sir! want 'em, indeed, no sir!"

"Look here!" says Burly, gently putting his pipe down, "this is no business of mine, outside this house you may kill him, but this room is kept for the actors, so please; out you go!" "But we'll have our money" says one of the men. "That's right!" cry the rest. "You can wait for him all night and pump upon him in the morning; but out you go now." A rough hand is placed upon the coat collar of Gruntley, and he is being surrounded.

"Harry!" he cries piteously, the large tears rolling down his cheeks, "don't let 'em murder me, my boy!"

"They may do so in the morning" is the cool answer, "but they shall certainly not stay in this private room to upset my pipe." And the speaker's right arm grasps the foremost man's shoulder and draws him from Gruntley, the time the actor never heeds the enraged faces around him.

"Come!" says he, kindly, to the man, "you're a strong fellow, but I've had a pound of good meat in me to-day and for many days before."

"He's a thief," says the man, writhing under the grip.

"I know it," is the reply, "but I'll not have him hurt here before me to-night, pump upon him to-morrow if he does not pay, and I'll give you beer to keep up the fun."

"Will you make him give us a little to go on with?" ask two or three.

"Not here! go down peaceably and I'll come to you." The men

are going away when Burly stops them and gives them a sovereign, and bids them go away quietly. The man who has been gripped turns round to the sot and says enquiringly.

"He'll get it out of him again?"

"What's your feeling about it?" is the answer.

"Harry, my boy, Gad! it was a fine idea of yours to put 'em off with the pumping, though faix it's too cold now to be pleasant!" and the old man chuckles and draws nearer to the roaring fire. Fear makes some men cold though the perspiration rolls from off them.

"I meant and mean what I said."

"Gud help me! then I am on my last legs. Niver have the devils in any part done this before!" Burly holds out his hand.

"Don't have any jingle heard to-night, Harry, my dear boy, it's dangerous, wait till to-morrow!"

"I'll have your bag out among them if you keep me waiting!" The money is drawn stealthily from a bag that is never taken from the pocket.

It is the morning after this that Ted and the rest of the company assemble for rehearsal. The day is bitterly cold and the members of the "kimpiny" standing on the stage are nearly benumbed.

Gruntley sits at a table behind a pile of bills of performances. The men when speaking to any one of the ladies say "dear." Mrs. Mostgone looks towards Ted and faints from the effects of the cold. Mr. Mostgone regrets his inability to get her anything warm, whereupon Ted sends for the necessary brandy; but says he will not do so again. And many times does he wink in the direction of the little man, who, nothing will or can see save the part in his hand. One thing is certain, the manager takes no share in the rehearsal, which seems to be conducted in this manner. When not engaged the members walk by the wings mumbling their parts, whilst those rehearsing read from bits of paper, agreeing to cross here and to do "that little piece of business there." This goes on for some time, varied by occasional notes from the fiddle and by a little disturbance between Skip and the musician. "What's the matter?" asks Gruntley, looking up at the sot, who, to three other duties, combines that of stage manager.

"He wants a bit of music at this entrance and it weakens the effect to give it too freely."

"Oh! don't be mane," says Gruntley, contemptuously, "let him have a scrape and good luck to him."

"And I don't scrape at all at night" grumbles the fiddler, breaking into the dispute "if I don't get my money!"

"Now then," says Gruntley, starting with vivacity, "for the rare ould 'Grane Bushes,' leddies and gentlemen!" When excited, the brogue comes out purely; but the look of astonishment upon the faces of his company turns his "leddies and gentlemen" into something stronger.

"The what?" says Skip.

"*What!* are you after?" growls Burly.

"Am I your manager, leddies and gentlemen, or am I your servant and be damned to you?"

"You're an old fool," says Burly, "where are your people, scenery,—but there, what's the use of talking to you, why I don't suppose you've even a book of it."

"Haven't any of you got a book of the Grane Bushes," cries Gruntley, "and do you mean to say that leddies and gentlemen of my company go through the country without the Grane Bushes?"

"And sir," continues he, turning in a rage towards Ted, whom he has not addressed since the first meeting, "do you mean to say you haven't the Grane Bushes among your trunks?"

"No! or I'd lend them to you to hang your linen on." Burly laughs and says the Green Bushes will not have him and that the bill had better be altered. Skip will side with the,—old gentleman in any case so long as he fancies gain will be the result; therefore he raises his eyebrows in astonishment and places his hands after the manner of stage surprise, which being seconded by Mostgone becomes followed by Miss Skip.

"You know the bespake's all,"—and Gruntley places his finger to the side of his nose and looks mysteriously in the direction of the musician; "but Harry, my boy, the bills are out and you must pull it through for the good of the ship, for upon the soul of me I want to pay my company to-morrow night, and the devils of printers are so religious here that they'll not print bills without the money being given first, nor will they come to the "theatre" unless they have orders.

"Ye've played in the Grane Bushes, my man?" asks Gruntley, turning suddenly towards Ted.

"No!" is the cool answer.

"There leddies and gentlemen, that's what I pay five and twenty shillings a week for, and can ye wonder I haven't a shirt to the back

of me, never played in the Grane Bushes, and calls himself an actor!"

"Wouldn't he make a cat laugh," whispers Burly to the young lady, but as he does not point to Gruntley, she says that Ted would, and the big man turns away with ill-concealed disgust.

Skip has not been treated to brandy, and as it has been hard to play the spasms and teeth chattering to no purpose, he gives Ted his tragedy look and says, "mere ignorance, completely," he then turns upon his heel, gives the usual duck of disgust to his head, and turns upon the young gentleman with stage disdain.

"I'll pepper your nose" says Ted laughingly, though firmly, "if you come that with me!"

The words no sooner sound than Skip's cape is flung off in "I, Hamlet, the Dane" fashion—very demonstrative are sentimental actors—his hat is placed upon the ground, his coat sleeves are tucked back, his fists are doubled, his arms are extended and he rushes upon Ted, who lightly meets him and bestows a graceful tap upon the nose of the enemy, after the most approved fashion of a boxing club he once belonged to. Which preliminary operation being performed he steps back and informs Skip that there is plenty more of the same stuff at the shop ditto.

Skip has received an ignoble blow, he places his hands to his nose, looks into those hands and sees blood, blood, ha! and draws back, for a terrific onslaught, doubtless. The wicked love not the good, and certainly not one another. Mostgone grins maliciously, and the young lady and Mrs. Mostgone exchange defiant glances. The daughter runs and clings round the paternal neck and would wither Ted by her looks, were he in the least way desirous of being withered.

"Father you will not make *yourself* a blackguard!" It is evident that the victory costs him a struggle, for he makes many dreadful punches over his daughter's head in the direction of his foe, previous to promising that he will not.

"And now," cries Gruntley, "since you've had enough, Skip, we can go on with our work."

Burly will not play in the piece and there is not a book among the company. Mrs. Mostgone confesses to having played in it, and her the manager invests as the genius.

"But," cries the big man, laughing "nobody knows anything about it."

"Harry, my boy, don't talk wild, what's the merit in playing a piece you know, any fools can do that same, it's myself that sup-

poses leddies and gintlemen of my company capable of playing as well without a book as with one! There's an officer in furrin' lands, isn't there, darlin'?" continues Gruntley, turning towards Mrs. Mostgone.

"Yes, sir, there is!"

"Very well, that set (scene) will do for the furrin' parts, and you, sir, will do for the 'Captain.'" Ted is the 'sir,' and he says that he certainly will 'do' for the Captain if there is no book.

"Howd your tongue, sir, ye're to follow the leddy wherever she goes, or she follows you, which sure it's easy enough to settle between you, and you're shot or you shoot her, which also I don't know, and which doesn't matter upon the stage so long as somebody's shot." Short as the actual work performed is, they have been upon the stage more than three hours.

The rehearsal is over, and Mostgone and his wife are waiting about the doors with Skip and his daughter, thinking Ted will propitiate by a treat.

He has been placed too in a difficult part above them and, though they are not aware that he has not played before, it is a slight not to be forgiven.

He has the part because Burly whispered Gruntley to the effect that the officer had better be one who would look clean.

On leaving the theatre Ted looks round the High street for the little man, and on finding him and perceiving his uneasy look, and his wife at a little distance, he asks him if he wants any money.

"I knew he would lend you some," says the little man's wife, gratefully, when her husband regains her side. Ted and the little man are enjoying a pint of ale, when they hear a noise and behold Skip rush in followed by Mostgone.

Skip must have been running a considerable time for his face is red, his wind puffy, and by the smashed state of his hat and his torn garments it is clear that he has broken away from some enemy.

"What is it?" asks Mostgone for the third time.

"Why the moment I left you I went to do Jack the utility, the market man, my beautiful daughter being quite above that sort of thing, and had got to the top of the hill with a loaf under my cape and some bacon and eggs in my pocket, my hands were quite full, when all of a sudden a stuttering postman laid hold of me and knocked me down, smashed my eggs and hat, and said it was for cheating him out of the money I'd gammoned him to pay for my letters."

"I've never had any" said I. "Oh!" stuttered the postman "you're one of the theatre chaps and, if you aint the manager, as now I see you aint, you're one of the lot and you're all of a ki-e-idney!" A crowd of roughs got round me, the boys ran off with my things, and I've had to run for my life."

"Why didn't you pitch into him?" asks Mostgone.

"What!" cries Skip, indignantly, "with my hands full."

"Of course you couldn't" says Mostgone. The yellow of the eggs clings to Skip's trowsers and cape, he looks at the empty glasses, then at Ted, feels his pockets, tries to put his hat into shape, and says he hasn't a penny.

"Come, stand some ale," says he to Ted, "don't be mean, that's not the way to get on, you know you've got money and if you haven't you'll have to send home for some." Mostgone looks at the little man in a manner that says "You're not going to have him all to yourself," and then through the ordinary medium conveys, "when I first entered the profession my manager opened all my letters and stole my money."

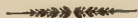
There is a little beer remaining; so Ted drinks it and says, "Ah! I never leave anything about!"

He and the little man go their ways, and leave Skip staring at Mostgone; and Mostgone staring at Skip.





“THE CURTAIN UP.”



NIGHT! and the players met for the play. Skip takes from his pocket a brush and a bit of blacking from a tobacco box which he and Mostgone share upon their boots. Ted, having availed himself of the advice of the little man, which was to get to the theatre early and learn how to dress himself, is ready



and stands watching the others. Mostgone is an old man, and though thousands live out the three score and ten without red and black lines upon forehead and face and a carefully prepared bald head, he has all these traditionary points complete in a few minutes. Suddenly he finds that he is without a bit of colour, so he whispers Skip to be friendly with Ted, who by this time is behind the curtain as an actor. He shivers with the cold, and as he sees the women with naked arms and uncovered breasts he feels still colder. He can see their faces blue with the cold and, to add to discomfiture, wind and snow beat through the roof. The band begins to play and he peeps through the curtain. Not a hundred in the house.

"Ruffian faces and foul language," mutters Ted, sadly. As he looks, a large apple is thrown at a servant girl that strikes her eye and sends her away crying and vowing never to enter the place again. This joke lasts till an elderly lady-like looking woman, youthfully attired, enters a box.

Ted has hopes, for little knows he that she is a governess sent to see if the company is worth a visit. The lady is the "observed," and for a few minutes she takes it in good part; but, as nuts and tobacco quids and rude jests begin to thicken upon her, she makes a hasty exit.

"Skip," cries Ted, "these wretches are all smoking or squirting tobacco quids about."

"How many country theatres have you been in?" is Skip's contemptuous rejoinder. Up comes Burly shaking his fist and his eyes kindling with rage.

"Here! I can't do it, I'm only half dressed, go on and pitch into them, Ted, or there won't be a pound in the house on my night." Ted is about to expostulate, just as Burly bundles him upon the stage in front of the curtain.

"Tell them," says Burly from behind, "I'll be up if there's any more of it. Tell 'em, I know the butcher chap at the head of this and that I'll pound him in his own basket to-morrow."

"Ladies and gentlemen." Seeing there are no ladies, but only a few women cuddled by soldiers, he says "Gentlemen." In as big a fix still, for he can see no gentlemen.

"Roughs!" grinds out Burly.

"Roughs!" roars Ted. "I am desired by Mr. Burly to inform you that if any one else is annoyed here to-night by blackguards in the gallery he'll be up with them and will pound the butcher in his

own basket." The butcher indulges in an unearthly kind of whistle and cries "Walker!"

"Me—art!" squeals the cat's-meat-man. Aside comes the curtain, and shews Burly red with paint and rage. In his shirt sleeves and but half made up for his part. He singles his men out



in an instant and shouts, "Walker and Meat, is it, right, my boys!" The head bobs behind the curtain again and Burly is on the gallery stairs.

"Harry, don't spoil the business, let the divils alone: they'll tear the place up."

But Gruntley had better been silent, for he is sent rolling, and Burly is in front of the butcher and cat's-meat-man, and half fed men and big boys are all sent rolling over and over the while they receive a pretty equal share of the blows the enraged actor deals round him.

"And now, butcher and cat's meat, look out, I finish with you."

The butcher shows fight just in time to get Burly's fist upon his nose.

"Cut it! will yer?" roars the butcher, after a few rounds, "I give in."

"Take that then," says Burly, dealing a final blow, before he turns to commence afresh upon the cat's-meat-man. When quite finished he bids them all look out, for, if he can, the next one he catches he'll throw into the pit. The pit being nearly empty is doubtless why the gallery keeps itself moderately select for the remainder of the evening. Burly is too much for the butcher or cats'-meat-man or either would battle it out. They do not hiss Burly when he plays. They are rough, untaught fellows; but English. He is a bigger favourite than ever, for the butcher is a stout lad whom no one dares jeer. Burly is on the stage. Most-gone and Skip are outwardly praising him and inwardly hoping that he will be pelted with ginger beer bottles. He is obliging Gruntley by playing in a little piece before the drama. The theatre partially fills by the time the curtain rises and if the noise made Ted confused, the silence when all eyes turn to two confuses him much more. Not a ragged boy in the place who cannot flutter his heart with a hiss.

He feels cold and dizzy, and had he learnt a part he feels the words would leave him. Fortunately he has a way of carrying things well, and many judged strong minded and cool are nervous, though not to the extent to render them unfit for duty. How the Green Bushes is played Ted does not know. He hears a comic song sung by his friend and sees the two ladies dragged about. Were there twenty ladies Gruntley would use them all. Whenever and wherever Mrs. Mostgone leads the way, then and there Ted follows her. And so naturally that the opinion throughout the house is more than favourable to his acting. By Gruntley's directions he has to fire a gun, and he levels one at Mrs. Mostgone's head.

"Mostgone!" cries the lady, "stop the wretch! look at him!" Her hand is before her eyes and she is really alarmed.

"Put it down," screams Mostgone from the side.

"Fire in the air! straight up, so," and the old man throws out his left leg, shuts his eyes and holds his right arm perpendicularly in the air.

Skip ran behind Mostgone the moment the captain took possession of the fire arm.

"I knew from this morning," says he, "he was not right and, like all such people, malicious." And Skip taps his forehead and is thankful that his daughter is not doing the "lead."

"Fire," cries the sot, very far gone in drink and under the impression that the house is getting impatient. Ted is more than ever confused, and still keeps the gun pointed.

"But this is horrible," cries Mrs. Mostgone. "I'll have the fellow up," hisses her husband, as he gets still farther from the captain.

Bang! goes the gun. Down goes the lady, with a scream that brings applause from all parts of the house.

On rush Mostgone and Skip to raise the,—body and down comes the drop. Gruntley insisted upon Ted's shooting the woman, and luckily she has kept too much out of powder way to be hurt. The house is still in applause.

"Gad! there's something in the fellow," says Gruntley in the direction of Ted.

"There'll be something in some of us, too," growls Burly, "if a bullet happens to get in any of his guns. However, it's Mostgone's look out, he plays the villains; I don't."

"Oh! this is horrible," cries Mostgone.

"What ought I to have done?" asks Ted of his friend in the dressing den.

"Fired over your head in the air, it's dangerous any other way. Better still, pretend to shoot, another time, and let them fire from off the side, or one night you'll blow your hand off with a bad fire arm."

"Hulloa!" cries Ted, "my ring has been taken from my box."

"Gold?" asks the little man.

"Yes!"

When Mostgone and Skip come down to the dressing place they display great energy in trying to find the ring, and at last place the theft to the account of the rough boy who runs the errands.

But Ted thinks otherwise, and says, "For the future I keep my things to myself, and, if I catch so much as a piece of chalk gone, look out!" And each night he takes his things from the theatre. There is a bit of crape hair in his box and requiring it he has his glue out for the manufacture of a beard. Looking round he sees Skip stroking a mustache and imperial. Not after the usual style of burnt cork; but a nicely got up crape hair affair. The piece has commenced and Ted's crape hair is gone. Burly stands at the side previous to retiring for the night. Allusion has been made to the part Skip plays being known by a mustache and he is about to go on when Ted produces a little flask and says, "here, Skip, I musn't forget you!" No sooner the flask in Skip's hand than Ted with a powerful tug seizes the glued hair and tears it from where in a

double sense it belongs not. "I told you I would: every time you steal anything of mine I'll serve you the same." Burly is off with a roar of laughter, having given Ted an approving slap upon the back. As usual Gruntley manages to evade payment, and after the performance Ted looks at his parts on the "cast." The play is *The Lady of Lyons* and, if the business were conducted properly, actresses and actors would have some spare time. But then the life, by many considered so idle, would resolve itself into going home after eleven at night. Learning parts for two, three, or four hours, with the same work to be continued after sleep in the morning. At the theatre by eleven and to stay there till one, two, or even three, and again there by a little after six in the evening. Beauseant is given to Ted and a fine Beauseant he makes of it. Indeed the play is all excitement from beginning to end. Skip as Glavis never says one word of the text, but rushes about behind the scenes and at the sides with his part in his hand. A young fellow has been "behind" all the evening with a flask of brandy, hence Skip and Mostgone, the latter as Damas, are blinky.

Ted has sat up best part of the night studying his part, but as Gruntley said the piece would not be played he has not given it proper attention. If Skip had given his cues he had done well; Beauseant had done well. Burly is naturally wroth, and says he will not play Claude Melnotte again with such a Beauseant.

"He never says one word of the play," expostulates poor Ted, referring to Skip, "but does a bit of his own part, and then a bit of mine, and blinks and looks funny and, after his jumbling me up, by the time I get to you my part is all so shaken up that I don't know where I am; I'm mixed!"

"To trust in such a fellow!" cries Burly.

"To talk to me of cues in the excitement of playing!" cries Skip, in great disgust.

"You're a nice lot," adds Burly.

"If," says Ted, "I thought I could play Claude before I began playing I know now that Gaspar or Glavis would tax me. It isn't all my fault! they would make me Beauseant, and I have done as well as I could."

"If you play it again, I'll throw you into the pit!" roars Burly.

"No you won't," says Ted, getting close to the big man and gazing steadily at him."

"Go back to your work," cries Burly, hoarse with passion. The savage blood of the lesser man is roused and so he sneers.

"I've begun my work where you'll leave off, butcher!" The taunt stings, for with red face, massive frame, and the blue blouse, Burly is not unlike a butcher in appearance. A shocking oath, a roar, a glisten of eyes and raising of arms that in one more minute, despite resolution, nothing against such bulk, will hurl Ted among the occupants of the pit. But that moment comes not, for the slight limbs so steadily ready to do their work cause the man to burst away from him with a fresh oath.

The play proceeds, and Gruntley is whining about the stage: there is no Gaspar. It is too much for Skip's dignity to "double," Mostgone's is out of the question; others are not to be found. The piece has begun under distressing circumstances and under the same is proceeding. Now Gruntley is dressed as on the first night of our making his acquaintance. His boots have not been blacked since in his possession, his face is begrimed with dirt, the rough overcoat is dusty, and its collar tucked close round his throat.

Skip is proving his rights not to double and, "whirra! whirra!" cries Gruntley, for the scene is on, and, in a minute or two the stage will be "to let." Not long to let, Gruntley knows his Melnotte, and so doubly thick come his fears.

"By Gud; it's near at hand!"

"Can't,"—Skip is beginning; but Gruntley pulls the wig off the speaker's head and cries "be quiet, ye divil! will ye? and let yer manager think!"

And as he so speaks he brushes his boots with the wig, gives his face a wipe with his hands, puts the wig on the top of his head and rushes on in time as Gaspar. Never a Melnotte with such a start as this one when the phenomenon comes before him with a bounce.

For an instant it is a question whether rage or a sense of the ridiculous will possess Claude, and after that it is astonishment till he asks the "news." Gruntley peeps up at the gallery and then says with a jerk.

"What's the use of making all this fuss, the young leddy says she won't have anything to do with you, and as to her father, he says we may all go and be,—you know what I mane?"

Before Claude can get near him he is off, and the house is in a roar of laughter, and, as the stage hero cannot tear a letter, seeing that none is at hand, he pegs into the property picture, and the scene ends. Gruntley loses no time in regaining the admission door, and as there are some officers "elevated" who have "tipped" the manager to go behind, and have expressed their willingness to

treat the company to brandy, he bids them wait a bit, and hastens back to Burly.

"Harry, my boy, 'twas all for the best, for the soul of me it could'nt be helped, and the house took it in good part."

"Keep clear of me till this piece is over" cries Burly.

"There now, leddies and gentlemen, it's a cowld night, business is good to-night, yes, I'll own it, to-night, don't be hard upon me, Harry, it's a cowld night, and it's myself, bless every one of yer, that's sent for a quart of brandy, do ye hear, a quart, with sugar and hot water to mix as you like!"

"Here!" says Burly to a man engaged as a carpenter, "get me a pint of beer, and a half for yourself."

"What does it mean?" asks Ted; but before there is time for any answer there appear the brandy, cans of hot water, glasses and sugar. Skip's head appears. He has taken no notice of Gruntley's remark about the "trate" but he gives an astonished sniff, settles his looks upon the glasses, walks suspiciously towards them, tastes, cautiously at first, expresses extreme kindness to all mankind, looks all round, says "very handsome," and "very handsome, indeed," and takes a copious draught of the brandy, then makes himself a comforting glass of grog as a quencher, and reels to fetch Mostgone. Instead of one, there are many quarts of the spirit. Burly has his beer in his hand, "here!" says he to Ted, "one can drink after you."

"Thank'ee" remarks Ted, drinking with him.

"You'll understand the remark before this night's over" says Burly.

"Let *me* make you a glass, Mr. Burly," simpers Miss Skip, tenderly.

"You'd better not wait for excuses," answers the man, "or, though it's plentiful as water, you'll not get it first hand!"

Like many rough speeches it is true, for the sottish moisture is already trickling from her father's lips. The young lady cries, and Mrs. Mostgone, thoroughly sentimental herself, applies brandy and water. Burly moves to the end of the stage and with Ted stands watching the group.

"If there were cisterns full they would drink themselves dead" says Ted.

"Here," cries the sot, handing Ted a glass. In the style of Shylock Ted refuses it, saying he will beer with him in moderation but not "spirit" with him.

"Take a sup with him," says Burly, "I would, only I may have



to throw those down the dressing room stairs that sent it." Ted acts upon his advice, and whispers the little man who is by his side to the effect that Burly will hurt nobody.

"After Gruntley's Gaspar," returns the other, "I should not like to see him annoyed."

"He's violent and strong," observes Ted, taking in the dimensions of the subject of their conversation.

"Mad, when angered," says the little man.

Six or seven officers "get" up the steps and stand upon the stage.

Amid the half drunken expression of their faces there falls a supercilious look on the people around.

From the moment of their appearance, Burly, having previously taken the green room to himself to dress in—retires.

“Here!” says one to Ted, “lay hold!”

“I never drink neat spirits.”

“What!” and the speaker takes two drinks before he seems able to recover himself.

“This line would suit me!” says the boy-officer.

“Should think any ‘public’ one would,” replies Ted.

The friends of the officer are annoyed, and they and Ted are at badinage-warfare when Burly comes out of his green-room-dressing room.

At last the boy officer says “fool,” and his friends very properly blame him, and Burly cuts the matter short by saying that if they do not “pack” before he commences the next act they’ll have to do so by a way shorter than pleasant. Angry words from them about “showman,” and from him, that he has not touched their drink and that they have no right where they are. More words from the officers, and the face of Burly reddens.



“I’m about to begin the act: will you go?” The rough fellow screams the words rather than speaks them, and in his rage there is mingled passionate entreaty.

A splendid fellow from their number, but still no match for the man whose strong arms have grown stronger with a rough life, comes and stands provokingly, mockingly in front of him. So cool,

so polished, that it is evident he can give an enemy a mortal blow and then tenderly and courteously assist him in his fall.

Burly's arm threatens, and the officer strikes him lightly upon the face. Merely a touch, but yet a blow. A blow that defies the giant and all his works.

"You cannot call such a fellow out," entreats one of the officer's friends, and in an instant the others are between the two men. And for this instant Burly stands powerless, and it is certain he has never been so treated before in all his life. But surprise is quickly over, and with an oath he rains heavy blows around him, and, by sheer bulk and strength, reaches the man who struck him and deals a blow from the effects of which the officer lies like dead. Yet it seems as if nothing can still his passion. The officer rises, very pale, outwardly calm, and looking fixedly at the actor.

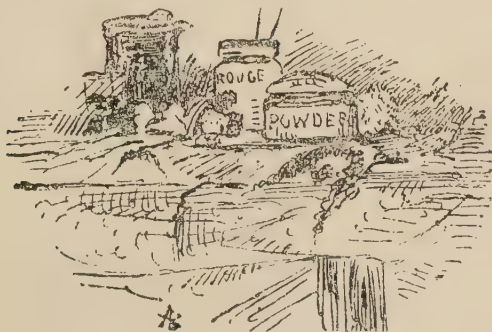
"Be quiet! raves Burly, "you struck me, no action at law will lie, and as for calling me out, if you dare do so, I'll strike you flat every time you jostle me. I could, I tell you! squeeze your hand-box ribs in!"

Ted is about to speak, very modestly, very respectfully.

"Be quiet," says the little man, "he'll kill you if you interfere now and cry over you afterwards."

"But this is serious," mutters Ted.

"Would be so were Burly a brother officer," softly speaks the little man, "but the man struck is an English gentleman, and in the morning he will say he had no business to strike Burly, and Burly will own he had no right to threaten or roar at the officer." Which becomes sooth, for the officer takes Five Pounds' worth of tickets for Burly's benefit, laughingly saying as he does so, that the actor should take a lesson from him in the cool way of doing things, and he, one of him in pole-axing.



"LITTLE DISTURBANCES."

CIRCUMSTANCES rule in the money boxes and endeavour to lay hold of Gruntley as he makes exit from the theatre. The landlady's agent sits and only rises, when he has taken enough for the rent, to make way for the man from the gas company. The manager is getting known and so he surveys with evil eyes all the "divils" of the audience who go in till his own turn begins. It is a Macbeth night and the minute near when



the curtain is to go up. A lady is to make her appearance as the Thane's wife, or, in plainer terms, an amateur actress who has

paid Gruntley Five Pounds for the part, and he having received the money, is as indifferent about the matter, as the audience is likely to be after the first scene. She is very beautiful and possessed of an Irish accent that causes the manager to say, "Leddly Macbeth, being a Scotchwoman, will be more naturally played by her than by an Englishwoman." At rehearsal she mumbles her part, and the women, ever quick in such matters, know the source whence she derives her means.

Having played Macbeth many times, Burly comes upon the stage towards the rehearsal of the last scene looking darkly at the woman. The most beautiful she in creation cannot be regarded with favour by an actor who has to run the risk of a failure. Her handsome, sinful, swimming eyes say plainly "Who is this man?" Eyes that will not mate with lowly honesty and which will sin only with the etiquette of good breeding. Of a sudden she loses herself in a line, of that greatest melo-dramatic-tragedy ever written, and there shows a grand spark.

But what the use of one flashing stroke in three hours steady work? Work requiring as many years of patient practice to dress the part and walk on and off at the proper entrances and exits. Ted has several parts, and whoever else can be done without he cannot. The piece is Scotch, for Macbeth and his Lady have tartan dresses, and Ted has three eagles' feathers, possessions no sooner known than Mostgone and Skip, as Macduff and Malcolm, beg and participate in. Still, the curtain ought to go up and yet no one moves. Economy has been studied, for in the bills the various parts to be performed by Ted figure under the names of Edmunds, Clarke, and Langridge. The representative of these is seated determinedly at the sides singing "fal, lal a lal, lal la!" Coin is not with him and he is of a mind to get some. And so to "fal, lal a lal, lal la!" he keeps to get it. Burly begins to get suspicious, as also do companionable Mostgone and Skip.

"There'll be no good in upsetting the piece" says the big man, "and my night coming on, too, better choke him after the performance!"

The singing goes on.

Mostgone and Skip are resolved upon something desperate this night, as is seen in the dreadfully resolute manner in which Macduff and Malcolm carry their feathers. But who is Ted, and what right has "he" to take anything upon himself? The sot has left the stage for the beer shop where he lodges till such time as Gruntley

finds it impossible to do without him and advisable to money him out. Burly is taking in the scene, shrugging his shoulders and cursing. No man to cry is Gruntley After he is hurt. So bribing a boy with a sight of the mysterious part of the theatre, and lugging the unlucky youth's hair till he cries with pain, he says; "Come wit me, ye young divil, and swear as I tell you, or it's a crack ye'll be getting and no sight of the beautiful Leddy Macbeth!" Just by the dressing room door, and giving another tug to the boy's hair that makes him jump again, and crumpling an old letter, and pulling a front lump of his own hair, Gruntley rushes into the shed and on to the stage. The boy follows him, amid his pain, only too glad to get a sight of the wonderful place. His eyes are red with crying, and the manager performs a back fall in presence of all his company. The band stops, and for an instant the "fal lal la!" solo stops too. Mostgone grinds what are left of his grinding teeth, Skip does his usual defiance and the two ladies join in looking disgusted. "Wather! wather!" and Gruntley opens an eye in the direction whence he expects help, and gets it, from the boy.



"He must be bad, though," says Mrs. Mostgone, "he has drunk full half a quatern." Skip sniffs irresolutely. Burly comes out of his den, lights a pipe, and is as unmoved as the "fal lal la" gentleman. Still, it is a splendid fall. Did any but such a hackneyed set see it needs must it elicit applause, for fat is Gruntley and, intending to give the part nature, he has fallen not only harder than desirable but also upon a very knobby portion of the boards.

"It's myself that meant to pay my own Leddies and Gintlemen to-night, every soul of yer; but it's my own two little darlings of boys that have been out and got drowned in the say." Skip's hands are raised like fins, and his eyes roll in an alarming manner; Gruntley directs the siege towards Mostgone Mrs.

"Ye are a mother yourself, ma'am. Gud bless yer, and pray

wit me that the other hard hearted wretches may be forgiven for their wickedness to me on such an occasion!"

Tears pour down his cheeks, and the company look aghast. Again Skip gets his hands out and in conjunction with Mostgone moves his head up and down.

"Of course it's a lie!" whispers Skip.

"Harry, my boy!" but Burly smokes on, and it is plain that the "fal lal la" has ceased only out of consideration for the bare mention of such a horrible statement.

"Harry, my boy! to none of the other devils but this little angel and yourself, and ye are an angel in a bad world, my dear, will yer manager say it, but from the spalpane that brought the note ask anything."

"Did you bring that note?" cries Burly so suddenly and fiercely to the boy, and with an action so like Gruntley's at time of the hair pulling, that the lad cries afresh, and, not knowing what to do, says "Yes! please, sir!"

Can he do else? What right has he, a poor boy, who has longed and longed hundreds of times to peep behind this mystic place, to contradict the man who seems the conjurer over all the great ladies and gentlemen before him? The play is to go on, for the women are somewhat women still, and soon they battle every doubt away from those who keep in the mind of not playing. Gruntley rapidly recovers and gets away from the stage. Not to stay away; for Ted's face perplexes him.

"If you don't settle him," says Burly to Gruntley, "I'll settle you." And then growls the giant to "fal la!" "what's the use of upsetting the night's work, do it outside?"

And when you get home your landlady pay, cannot by fal, la, lal la! fal, lal, der lal, lay!"

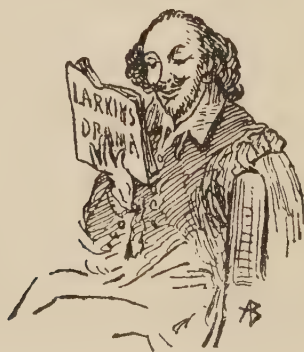
Burly cannot stand proof against the twinkle of Ted's bright eyes, so, though much angered, he turns aside to wait upon Gruntley. The Thanes are at work and one of Ted's many parts is wanted, and as all he does is to "fal la" at the sides, Gruntley creeps behind him and gives him a crown.

'Pon the soul of me you're worth your money and I'll pay up to-night." The money is carefully stowed away and the gentleman betakes himself to "fal lal lal-ing" again. "Yer thafe get on wit yer, would ye be afther spoiling my Leddy Macbeth?" Burly's eyes are glistening in direction Gruntley, and Gruntley direction is getting alarmed.

"I go on for five shillings more!"

"There's half" says Gruntley; but Ted gets the sum asked, on receipt of which he jumps to the wing in time to meet the enraged eyes of Macbeth. Well packed is the house, for many have entered to see the woman, not Lady Macbeth, and Burly is known to shine somewhat in his part. All points considered things are explosive.

That mass of white spots with dots for eyes! The exceeding beauty of the woman; the grace and half union of the lady. But the moment she commences business her steps plough, her utterance mouthes and all is a failure. By rehearsal she has to sit. From the gruff manner of her husband it is manifest that the much maligned Macbeth is not tender to his wife, who, being taken aback by the really fair acting of her lord, in confusion, bumps upon her seat. And in such a manner that Macbeth cannot help getting his chair upon her dress. She has been Mrs. Siddons at rehearsal and he?—but now at night conceit wanes. Lady Macbeth has felt "the future in the instant," and Macbeth has begun "My dearest love,—you're on my dress." These words are put in so sweetly by the lady that Macbeth finishes his lines, and his wife politely asks when the king goes "hence." Macbeth gives to-morrow,—as,—“You'd better get off” says the Thane's wife, and, this time, so pettishly that Macbeth utters something in a low tone that makes even Lady Macbeth open her eyes. For to speak truth, Burly, after the manner of Sancho Panza, has advised every something to bake as she brews, and each man to go to dinner with what appetite he may. And so the lady gets on again to “look like the innocent flower, but”—get off my dress! “Oh! Macbeth! Macbeth! had you been well educated, and not mistaken loudness



for intensity, and acted as you now look and gesture, the time you jump from your chair and fling it at the wicked, unlucky Gruntley, who is near the wings, your fortunes had been easier.

"Come here! you old thief! come here and let me have something to lay hold of. You'll bring this cattle will you, this street,—* * * * * to murder Lady Macbeth, will you?" Though Gruntley cries "Gud help him," and that "it is a miserable death" he will die, he cuts off, nevertheless, nimbly enough for preservation of present life. Not a soul in the theatre but sides with the passionate man in whose enraged eyes tears are glistening. Unconscious of the fact he is playing William Tell. No one persuades Lady Macbeth to return to the stage. She merely says "he is a dreadful man," and hurries away as fast as possible. But Macbeth is nearly "done" and, notwithstanding that Mrs. Mostgone goes through the lines and business, nothing goes well with the Thane or King. Such a relief is Mrs. Mostgone after the inflated wanton that Macbeth brings himself to treat and drink with her and her husband. And Malcolm gets sympathetic spirit from Lady Macbeth. Empty Skip has no need to say he is not a Shakesperian actor, or scholar, at the soberest of times, and now that he is "gone" he merely runs about blinking at the cues and asking all sorts of people "where" he is.

"The puppy!" says he, after spoiling Macbeth's lines by going on at the wrong time and speaking some of the Thane's words instead of his own.

"The empty puppy!" adding his familiar expression; "to talk of cues in the excitement of playing." Business has got to the banquet scene, and poor Ted with his numerous parts, and from the jumble Skip has thrown him into, does manifestly ghost it a little before his time.

"I *can't* help it!" says the ghost, and indeed the poor spirit is troubled and squeezes its shook-up-pate in despair.

"It's that horrible Skip!" finishes the Ghost, *par parenthesis*, to the King.

"To still talk!" cries Burly in agony, his hands tearing manfully at his own hair," of having trusted in such a thing!" And without more ado Macbeth roars "hence, horrible shadow!" and, the moment he gets the ghost a bit off the side, he gives him such a sprawler that no ordinary spirit had ever ventured again upon a return to any knock down world. Macbeth is easier and says:

"Why, so:—being gone, I am a man again,—Pray you, sit still." But the worst of it is the ghost is not gone; but returning, and Macbeth, having his back towards *it*, only looks round to see a spirit spring up to his nose and deal him a whack that sets the whole house in a roar.

"Touch me again!" threatens Ted, in a low voice, "and I'll send some cats across your Macbeth stage!" Mostgone has been ill treated by the King, who has grumbled at the sight of a Macduff in slashed sleeves and American cloth leggings. "Sir!" says Mostgone, encouragingly to Banquo, "he's a puppy: I'm glad you're too much for him!" At which memorable speech Skip opens his eyes and then shuts them in the direction of the belligerents, under a very vague impression that neither the punch in the nose nor the speech of Mostgone is included in the text of Macbeth. But the audience is to be further astonished, for Mostgone, having partaken of good cheer and stimulated by the example of Ted, ventures upon some new points in order to divide honours with Macbeth.

"What do you mean by crossing like that for" growls Macbeth very justly, by reason of Mostgone's suddenly taking to stalking the stage in the approved manner of a turkey cock given to steps much longer than beseeming its legs? The private nature of Macduff can go no farther, hence, drawing his sword high above his head in a manner that makes the gallery expect the famous "lay on!" he gives a new reading by, "go, sir! you're a puppy!" And how they do it no one can tell, but Burly runs off the stage to wreak vengeance upon the manager, and Mostgone and Skip address one another in stray bits of the tragedy and push on for the combat, regardless of neither being Macbeth. And they are at the combat. And Mostgone is about to be victorious, but, for the time, he and Skip are crouching by the scene, a roll one, and indulging in that unearthly, antagonistic noise, that till late stood for the deadly enmity of the stage. Alas! for them, Gruntley is not to be found, and Burly is passing at the back; for one moment the frail scene is observed to vibrate, and the next, first Mostgone and then Skip are hurled by unseen and mighty throws or bundles not exactly into, but still so near, the pit, that Macduff in his fall can tell that the bass viol has a wart upon his nose, and Skip that the postman is in the first row and enjoying his disgrace.

Each member meets on the next morning in response to the manager's notice which desires them to muster not to rehearse but

to receive what is due to them and say "farewell." As for Mr. Burly's night, he, Mr. Gruntley, will get people from town.

"I am only sorry for your night, Harry, my boy, after that it's to the workhouse I go, after paying my leddies and gentlemen. Gud bless yer all, there's all the money I have, and it's sharing it among us I'm after. And to leave yer just as luck's beginning to turn." And Mr. Gruntley pays each about one week's salary in full out of a month's due.

"Had my leddies and gentlemen let bygones be bygones I could have paid regularly in future and cleared back debts." Gruntley is very heartbroken; and each finds the money good.

"Why," said one of the musicians, "if you really mean paying regularly in future I for one,"—and so on till all the actors receive parts for the ensuing week.



"Now," cries Gruntley in triumph, "I'll shew you what your manager can do now that the ship works well together!" And the poor fiddlers strike up briskly, and only Burly laughs, and Ted softly "fal, la la's."

Burly's night is a good one. Ten minutes before the doors open he says.

"Ted, will you swallow pride and help me?" Ted laughs, and says he will.

"Then take these tickets to the doors and sell them, every one sold will be money out of the old thief's clutches."

"I would'nt do such a thing for myself," says Ted, "but I will for you."

Burly throws a dark cloak over his theatrical dress.

"It will be the job you'll take most pleasure in" he laughs, "if you stay in this profession."

It's near time to commence, you're surely not going out dressed like that?"

"You'll see!" and followed by Ted he walks to the doors.

"Harry, my boy, it will be a cram!" The old man is very joyful.

"And when the house *is* crammed" says Burly, "I go on the stage," and raising his right arm, "if you come near these doors I'll fell you to the ground!"

Burly has well worked his benefit, and secured the services of the military band and, half an hour after the girl so frequently "left behind," poor girl! walks down the streets, he has let in a "full house."

Many are the laughs and jeers sent towards the whining old man, who vainly wrings his hands at the unjust suspicions of his dear Harry, who returns to the stage, as he deserves, with good earnings. What can Gruntley do? He knows that Burly will judiciously treat the company, and that the pieces will go well. To beg he is not ashamed, nor to steal afraid, if there be no likelihood of detection.



He takes some bills from his pocket and finds himself within a sausage shop. The owner, a woman, is old; he asks her to put a bill in the window and gives her an order for the beautiful play of the "Leddy of Lyons," and covers a pound of sausages with some bills, and after a few minutes leaves the shop.

"Something, anyhow, and it's after broiling the divils I'll be! Oh! it's a miserable death, though, I'll be dying!" for it suddenly strikes him that the lot is not quite a pound.

Not a cheerful life either seems he likely to lead just now, for the old woman, missing the sausages, rouses neighbours in her behalf and Gruntley is in their grip.

"Out wit yer, ye divils! dare ye lay hold of a gintleman, it's the money I've left on the counter, or taken the sausages knowing nothing at all about them!" All this is to no effect, for the old woman says it is a mercy the goose didn't go, too, and persists in locking Gruntley up. A remarkably fine goose the one to which she alludes, and the manager is upon his knees.

"For my children, ma'am, say nothing of it! it's that same goose that's done it all, and oh! ma'am! what a goose! I was about to

offer yer twelve shillings for it, and forgetting it made me take the sausages. And to-night, ma'am, it's worth a Pound to me for my company's supper and these good friends can go wit me and drink my health!" Content is cried or made, and Gruntley gets off with a fine goose and the sausages at the cost of great bodily fear and about twenty shillings.

"Gud help me!" moans the old sinner when outside the stage door where he stands pondering for some minutes. A start, that shews he has born an idea, and he is behind the scenes and among the company.

"I'd have used yer right, Harry, my boy, but never mind, it's a holiday I've had, and look here, did you ever see such a beautiful creature?" The goose is held up: Burly is inclined to be friendly with everybody.

"It's a raffle we'll have, my men!" and as Gruntley speaks he puckers his lips as a man who has just made a discovery and about to give its full benefit to the world.

"A shilling a member!"

"I'll have two chances" says Burly.

"I, one," follows Ted. And so say others till it is objected that there are too many.



"The money extra can't be spent, ye divils," sneers Gruntley, "can it?"

"A different matter," says Skip. Many hangers on behind the scenes act up to their expression of being in "the swim."

"I'll have two more chances and cook it for our supper if I win," observes Burly.

"Very handsome," remarks Skip. By this time Gruntley has more than twenty shillings. Among the rafflers is the Wretched Boy. Who having been helping Burly finds himself for the first time in his life the possessor of a Shilling. All have thrown, and the boy wins.

The goose in his hands and he about to run home.

"Very unfortunate!" says Skip. Something stronger than "remarkably so!" adds Mostgone.

"What the devil are you going to do?" roars Gruntley, seizing the boy by his hair.



"Take my goose home, please sir!"

"Ye are, are ye? ye young thafe! And what do ye do here? Is it for yer ugly self to intrude among the leddies and gintlemen of my kimpiny? It's lucky I didn't notice your dirty Shilling. There it is and take that home with it!" and Gruntley deals him a cuff on the ear, "and here, Mr. Skip, get off wit the beautiful goose



and have him cooked, wit lots more sausages which we'll pay for amongst us, for all our suppers!"

The owner of the theatre is a lady and, when about to decline through her agent any more business with Mr. Gruntley, the gentleman betakes himself with an extra load of blarney to her house.

"Now ma'am, it's a queer tenant I've been; but my kimpiny are a bad lot and it's careful I'm obliged to be!" Lady acquiesces.

"And as it would make no differ to you, and a great deal to myself, I should like to have the theayter for this next, my last week, for half what I've been paying, and to pay at the end of the week, when it's a present of this beautiful bracelet I want to make yer." Is there a woman whom jewels do not excite? The bracelet is handsome and valuable. The business is settled, and Gruntley is profuse in thanks.

"And don't yer ma'am, be in any apprehension that it will be a loss to me, for as I shall want you to accept it in public; the extra money I'll take will more than pay me." Away goes Gruntley with the bracelet. The day previous to this visit he entered the best jeweller's shop, selected and paid for the article and said, short and business like, "You know me, maybe, of the theatre; I'll trust you to return me the money I pay for this for a day, you'll hold the bracelet, for on Saturday morning I'll have to pay my kimpiny."

It is the "presentation" night, and by Gruntley-means the jeweller is caged in a box without money or bracelet. Still, there can be no harm, for yonder sits the wealthy landlady, known throughout the county for integrity. And is not Gruntley by her side telegraphing her admiration of the costly ornament?

The first piece has passed off triumphantly, and the landlady is handed from her box to the stage.

"Now, Leddies and Gintlemen, it's proud I am to tell you of the generosity of this lady and happy to place upon her arm the elegant jewel, beautiful as herself, as, Mr. Rue, your jeweller there will testify!" The applause is immense. Even the rough men of paste and brooms join in the cheers; for is he likely to make such a present and neglect to pay them? The jewel upon the lady's arm, and the jeweller with no thought of disturbing it. With the first hour of opening his shop the man anxiously expects Gruntley. And so the men of the theatre expect him.

"You had better run off to his lodging" advises Burly.

"What! would he dare steal?"

"Dare anything!" The man hurries off. From Gruntley's lodging to the residence of the owner of the theatre is but a short distance. The lady tears the bracelet from her arm; but says "I let him have the theatre and, as I've not been paid, the thing is mine."

"And as I've not been paid for the bracelet it's mine!" cries the jeweller. He recovered "back" his property, as a legal phrase now and then runs.

Gruntley slinks out of his lodging to make off; but hungry and savage eyes are on the watch, and just as Burly is thinking of pack-



ing up his properties, and Ted of writing to the manager he saw at the office of the agent, Gruntley is seen surrounded by all the men who have done his dirty work; but no work so dirty as that performed by himself.

"Down with him! out with his pockets!"

"Harry, my boy! Gud bless you, don't let 'em hurt the old man!"

"They may kill you!" and Burly fold his arms and quietly looks on.

"I'll fight any of you!" cries the old man, getting somewhat free and striking one of his captors a violent blow that sends him sprawling. Burly laughs. The old sinner trusts for a cry of "fair play!" to enable him to make off in the confusion, or at the worst he naturally prefers a stand up fight to a pommeling from a host. Vainly he moans, and wrings his hands towards Burly, for blow after blow from frenzied men, and curse after curse fall upon him.

"Mind yer! it's highway robbery!" He ceases moaning now he finds it useless, and in the hope that something will "turn up," long he defends his pockets: but there is nothing in them. Too cunning for those around him is Gruntley. To the pump is he taken and so drenched that were he an ordinary man he would die from the effects. They only leave off when he swoons, and even then many cannot refrain from parting kicks. Burly and Ted take a long walk, and returning, they come upon a man too exhausted and bruised to stand, for many are the rubs he gives his elbows and knees, and numerous his vain attempts at rising, and wet and shivering and covered with blood is he. Unperceived they creep towards him and amid moans and rubs, and curses and cryings, and chucklings, there comes; "Pumped upon! the divils; and it's pumped upon I'd be every day for the same money!"

These are our last words of Gruntley: and Skip and Mostgone we meet no more.





"A CHANCE FOR LARKINS."



ED by return post receives a letter to the effect that the pieces are cast and the company complete, but that he can have a small salary to play little parts. Or in language theatrical, parts omitted in the cast.

He reaches his destination, tired, spiritless, and really without a shilling. Refreshing himself by a wash and a general smarten up, he thinks; "now Gruntley's was the lowest kind of theatre, and this is judged one of the best."

The theatre is very clean looking, and equal to many London ones in appearance. On mention-

ing his business he is shewn to the manager who shakes hands with him, tells him the best way to obtain apartments, and with a smile bids him go and get himself introduced to the company.

"Apartments" quoth the actor. He has made his way to the manager's room through what appeared to him a ship's rigging and many gigantic bedsteads, and it certainly required the sharpest look out at every turn.

"This way," says the stage manager, leaving duty as prompter, and Ted is within the Green Room. All attention about the place has been exhausted for the audience. A fire in cold weather, and forms to sit upon, are all that managers find actors; in warm weather actors are not required. The king of the works comes by and stumbles over a broken step.

"Bless me," rubbing his shins, "this must be seen to, really, quite dangerous!" A carpenter is at once made to repair it.

"For two seasons," laughs a merry looking woman, "we've knocked our shins and the step has always been 'going' to be seen to." The king has departed and the actor and his stage manager are together.

Awkwardly so. A pale faced, mentally and bodily overworked young woman of about two and twenty is playing at chess with one of the actors. The game is taken up between "lines." Thus; she has advanced two pawns by the end of the first scene of the piece, or when she is a village girl, and by the end of the second act, or in the hands of the pirates, the game sets steadily in her favour. Some of the actresses are knitting. All are business like with hands upon work and quite indifferent to the new comer. Of one thing Ted feels assured, a better class of theatricals he cannot find.

At the wings, as he learns afterwards, it is "who is he?"

"And so," communes the actor of half-an-hour, "there's little hope of turning out a genius here?" A disgusting imp of an overgrown boy upon the stage, in his street clothes, becomes a gentleman fit for a Regent Street promenade, and a vulgar rascal of a beadle, a fop with extremely nice and correct notions. The business of the night is over, and Ted has two little parts for the morrow's rehearsal and night's playing.

"When here," says one, "You're sure of your money," and the speaker being married offers to board and lodge Ted till treasury day. Some are men who have been brought up to good professions and having once a strong taste for the life got into it and,—have to keep in it. It would take the starch out of many invective sermons for their authors to watch the hard moral life of these same men and women. Of the latter, they are masculine in the power of swallowing parts, womanly and marriageable in all else. The life, anxious and not borne up by one another's society, unbearable. Long rehearsals are enlivened by jokes, and in all the company there is but one drawback, a drunkard. Drunk he dares not be within the walls of the theatre; but always given that way. Pity for his wife and children alone tolerates him. A seventy four knowing all its shots may be drunken, but it must soon sink. Rehearse each day, act each night, learn when most sleep and be drunken, no! no!

After a fortnight Ted feels free, and begins to indulge in his love of joking. In any fight, maritime or land, there are called in

soldiers from the garrison. As usual, these combats generally end in red fire and the triumphs of the innocent, or when the voice of the stage manager calls out "tableau!" At which word every available member of the company is expected to join attitude. And, as Ted has noticed a short, stout man get out of these affairs, he resolves to do so too. The mode: the moment the fight begins, the little, fat man quietly ensconces himself near the wings, and only comes out in the nick of time when all cuffs are over to vigorously whisper "Tableau!" and to place himself in a most victorious attitude. His right arm high in air, his legs wide apart, and his tableau on more than one occasion securing the praises of the stage manager. Ted follows suit, and so popular becomes the process that in a very few nights there are scarcely any tableaux-vivants at all. The end is that the little fat man has to abandon his system entirely.

Most amusing to Ted are the sea-faring groups when just paid off.



These enter the theatre, and go out and re-enter three or four times during the evening. Paying each time, insisting upon doing so, saying it is for the good of the ship. Not always so, but some such wild proceeding constantly. Noisy and child-like these tars, who have returned to the white cliffs after years of absence. Not the amphibious set, who leave the plough tail to take a couple of years at sea to return to the places of their nativity to burden their friends; but hardy, apprenticed seamen, who after the confinement of ship-life storm the streets and howl, and sing, and drink and swear. One has been drunk for a week, and sober and moneyless, he finds himself in front of the justice, accused of having been

drunk and disorderly. The legal administrator mildly rebukes him, as handsome and well made a fellow as ever fed upon tinned meat, and says he will not commit him this time but advises care for the future. And then a bloated, wretched young creature, his wife, clings round his neck and throwing her revolting, sottish breath upon him calls him her "Jack."

"Sheer off" cries the tar in disgust and fear "who're you?"

"You'll find she's your wife" says the justice, sorrowfully and gravely. The rough, soft, bad, good tar puts the poor offal of the streets from him, and cries like the foolish fellow he has been, and begs hard to be committed.

"Not all love where there's half pay," softly mutters Ted, who has looked in.

One morning there is rehearsed a piece out of which the actors can make nothing. The stage manager says it will be a great success, for without considering flags, traps, dungeons, murders and dances, all of which it has, together with happy marriages and fires, two ships have been paid off. In all such pieces the actors know no more of the plot than can be gleaned from their own snatches. So, when the stage entrances are kept clear, a man may play many times in a piece and yet be totally ignorant of the story. "Holloa!" says the first low comedian to Ted "you're getting on, you've got a walking gentleman's part here!"



"What!" cry half-a-dozen gathering round him, as though he had entered into much worldly possessions.

"That be sugared" says "the" walking gentleman, and so add some of the others.

Ted has little to learn save dodging lines as "a letter:" at seven. A few minutes past "Mr. Brown, ma'am."

And so on after a similar style till eleven at night.

Hence at rehearsal he has many minutes but few half

hours. Determining to be well prepared, he has a small volume of standard plays with him which he studies. The "Honeymoon"

is in his hands, and he is in the scene room learning each part from the real Duke to the Mock.

"What are you doing?" asks "the" Duke of the theatre, quite indignantly and superciliously.

"Trying to make out some of these 'ard words 'ere," is the gracious answer.

Now our friend has had to learn two parts, that go on like the following for many pages, and also a third; that of a brigand.



"THE CALLING BORN."

Act 1. Scene 1. Enter from door L.

At——if he's all in proportion.

Squire Borrowgag is in the hall, ma'am, and begs to see you.

——Mr. Borrowgag here x^t.

Re-enter with Borrowgag.

At——hair on his head x^t.

These dodgers and worriers he has mastered all right. But such a not to be understood fellow is this brigand, that despite our actor being a good scholar and sharp,—he said he went upon the stage to keep Larkins company, it was to learn stage business so that he

might succeed as a dramatist,—but to keep to the audience side, this brigand confuses him.



His brains, far from helping him out of his difficulty, only conspire against him and plunge him farther ahead among the breakers, for they keep asking "what is this brigand, and what is the piece about?" This piece of the pirates, the happy marriages and red fires. He has on his paper. "The gay Flivano," stuck among the hieroglyphics, meaning that at act I, scene I, when these words sound, if they do in the horrible row of the piece, he is to appear on the stage on a rock, from a certain opening, to give about six lines to the effect that he's not himself, but somebody else who's expected to arrive, but who'll not come, per trap door, or from the roof. With the second low comedian Ted is on intimate terms, for to no low comedy aspires Ted, and to no Ted's mark aspires low comedy.

"Tell, there's a dear fellow, what all this is about? I'm a brigand."

Second low com. laughs, puts his hands up as quite enjoying the joke, and as having gone through a course of such pieces.

"Oh!" says he, after a pause, "there are brigands, are there, well as sailors, soldiers and funny farmers. What's it all about? Ha! nobody knows. I don't want to. All I know is, that I'm a funny farmer while they get the 'sets' ready. Lucky lemons, I'm shot at the end of the second act, and; he adds, gleefully, 'ghosts are not included.'"

"Ha! what's that!"—cries the little fat man, who stands near them, putting his hands to the sides of his wig with more action than he gives to his melo-drama.

"Fiz-kins! Talk not of love and Fiz-kins! ha!" he cries rushing on in great dismay 'Fiz-kins' and I stand listening here and 'Fiz-kins' is my cue for saying 'ha!'" And the little fat man runs and is just in time to get upon a piece of wood, glare, *do* a noise something between a howl and a growl, and cry "ha!" to the fall of the curtain.

This, to the little man's astonishment, is a point in the piece, for the applause hails down, notwithstanding that the actor knows nothing at all about the matter.

"Perhaps," muses the fat man "I've seen something; found something out."

"Where's the call boy," asks Ted, "there is a call boy, isn't there?"

Second low com. places his finger to his nose. Action significant of the call boy being a fiction. Like the dresser in a country theatre; one man to the company. An individual's share: what the individual can get.

"I wonder," muses the little fat man again "whether I'm an avenging spirit? I may be a returned wanderer." Evident he gives it up, for he has his pint of beer and bread and cheese. In the green room the younger people hold up their hands in fun at the piece: the more experienced languidly say that the thing goes well enough, despite there being too much "bustle" in it. A virtuous sailor captured by pirates, and alone in his dungeon. Bemoaning his hard, his cruel fate. Cause principal: no baccy.

Some ten or twelve tars in the pit have been out three or four times, during the first act, and are a little gone in rum, that is, a little gone for hard drinking sailors, and a very great deal gone in sympathy for the prisoner. When did a good William ever require to buy a pair of "tights and wides" for Black Eyed Susan in a sea port town?

"Had I only a bit of baccy," groans out the theatrical tar in a

voice of gathering thunder "my poor Poll! but a bit of baccy!" He pulls away at his trowsers and says "poor Poll!" and "baccy," again.

"Hang it, mate," calls out one of the tars, innocently getting up, "why didn't you look round before?"

So speaking there come one, two, three and four pieces of tobacco, with rope outside, till the actor has enough genuine tobacco for the whole company for a month. The townspeople are used to Jack. And like his ways?—In books when the naughty words are left out. When two tars ride about in a fly with an organ grinder and a monkey, the only wonder is, that it has never been done before.

"Come on," cries one of the sailors to his chums, meaning "more rum."

"No," exclaims another, and the decision is applauded by the others, "wait first till that blank, blank, blank villain gets paid out." The men's hands are upon their knees, their heads are bent forward and they are eagerly watching. Somehow the villain cares little for his part, and much for his safety. And, worse, he, the adjectived villain has to make off with the heroine of the piece. The virtuous sailor, the leading man, naturally, has escaped from prison, and is making good fight against his enemies. Using two swords and killing all sorts of wicked pirates. The tars are excited to the highest point.

"Bravo!" they roar, standing and waving their hats. The entire house takes up the cry: a little nature soon rouses humanity. Alas! for stage glory! presently the true man is being overpowered. Tied with strong ropes. Still, he fights bravely on with head and chest. Not at all tired. Simply panting. Up to this turning point in the dreadful scene, he has carried a sword in his mouth. They, the villains, the pirates fasten his legs. Is this to be borne? No!

"Avast! there," shouts one of the real tars. The "soups" look nervous. Appeal as it were to some tyrant at the side. The tars leap the orchestra and are on the stage. Poor "soups!" The tars so belabour them that they exit in strange dismay. Make unmanly faces and use action, like little boys ten minutes after they've been naughty, found out and punished.

The stage manager, knowing nothing better for the occasion, makes a point of it, and the soups will make a point of him, if he doesn't see to it, lets off about two shilling's worth of red fire,

pops down the curtain, and gets the tars off the actors' side of the house. The second low com. ruminates. And thus.

"I've been in sea-port towns, where, unless I were ginger beer bottle proof, I wouldn't do any iniquity against a tar for ten pounds a night. These bustling pieces are dangerous, too. A man was killed last season, and the one before a ballet girl broke her leg, through a bolt of a trap being drawn back ?

To give Ted a minute, he has a trade to learn. One thing to go to the wardrobe in the morning and get a dress, and quite another to know how to put it on at night. He may have genius for the work to feel, read, and express Shylock ; but years of drudgery and study will alone enable him to walk the Jew properly on and off the stage.

And actors are thought so much of. Particularly in the country. Take the following as an instance.

The male members of the Company had a friendly gathering among themselves, at one of the best hotels in the place. And conducted themselves as folks at friendly gatherings generally do ; and so finished. Ted was ashamed of them and himself for behaviour jointly. The next morning, he made it his business to call upon the head waiter and apologise. He felt it his duty. Waiters not being supposed to perform stewards' duties.

"Pray, sir, don't mention it," said the man, blandly, "we had a party of gentlemen here the other night and they conducted *themselves* just as bad."

Amid all his troubles, there was one beefsteak bow in his clouds ; salaries were paid to the fraction and minute. Better, paid smilingly, cheerfully, as knowing they were deserved. "And now," said Ted, "I'll try and get Larkins on ; down, I know he'll be like a,"—but he laughed and did not finish his sentence..



“LARKINS APPEARS AND EXITS.”



AFTER speaking to the manager and waiting a few days, Larkins appears upon the stage, expecting to see his friend, Ted,

doing Lears and Hamlets at a “country” theatre, and exceedingly astonished to find that he, John Larkins, one of the first actors extant, off the stage, is not intrusted with two lines at a time.

Still, he is determined to excel, so he goes straight to the “heavy” man and asks him to show him the short cut to theatric greatness.

“You’ve done a good deal of it, you know; so do it quick and no gammon.” This is done privately, and is to be kept secret. After a business transaction, in which the heavy man pockets five Pounds, promising to say nothing about it, the short route is commenced.

“My boy,” says the heavy:

“First study nature, and your judgment frame,
By her just standard, which is still the same;
Unerring nature still divinely bright,
One clear, unchanged and universal light.”

"Here, cut it," cries Larkins, "none of that gammon; how's it to be done? That Pope was the most artificial little beggar who ever wrote."

"Look at me," says the heavy, holding his hands out so that they look like slices of toast at the ends of two forks, and speaking in a voice from his boots "be natural." Larkins groans, wishes his five Pounds were in his pocket, sits on a chair and despairingly shakes his head from side to side.



"Study, my boy, the effect of the passions upon your own face, so that you may be able to distinguish those which become, as well as those which disfigure, it. Be careful, however, to draw a line between the alterations of the features that express the sentiments of the soul, and the grimaces of the muscles."

"What the deuce are you at?" cries John.

"Be patient, my boy, and like dirty water it'll settle itself, in a minute or two."

"Oh! all right if it don't take a week, as it looks likely to."

"Now never work yourself up to tears; but if they come, don't stop 'em."

"Gammon! how can I stop 'em, Spooney, if they come."

Young man, young man, I was not prepared for such a display of vulgarity. You may forget your part one of these nights!"

Larkins apologises.

"Above all, be in earnest."

"How?"—

Why,—but it will all come in proper order. Music, drawing, painting, fencing—I'll teach you the broad sword for ten bob, and the foils for a quid,—will each lend its respective grace. These will enable you to put on all the wrinkles and weaknesses of the greatest age."

"I say, if you can, you know, try and let me have at least a dozen tips for my coin?"

"Sir, I shall do my duty, and then leave you. In heroes and princes assume the distant pride, exalted manners and stately port of rank and royalty."

"But how, where from?"

"Look at me, sir, when I play. Move with dignity, speak with dignity; never let your prince interfere with your gentleman, nor your gentleman with your peasant."

"There's something in that" says poor Larkins, thinking of liberal conservatives, and conservative liberals.

Heavy is quite pleased.

"Be always judicious, have in your possession every key of the soul. Transfix your hearers. Master the passions; tune them to



your will; wake 'em, swell 'em, soothe 'em, melt 'em to softness and rouse 'em to fi-re!" Run like lightning from the placidly merry to the tremendously horrific. Never forget; that no man was ever truly great without possessing something original. You will see when I play Iago that I have a pair of mustaches which I pull up and down at will, by horse hair; they are most-effective."

"This is very dreadful" mutters Larkins, to himself.

"Learn to point your acting: to make your part 'the' part. The public will applaud 'the' part and, what the public applauds, the managers will pay most for. Any muff can play a good part; the difficulty is with a bad 'un. See what sticks I get; and yet see what I do with 'em!"

"Apoplexy" thinks Larkins "will only be the end of this: and a fiver for it, too!"

"Now, many actors exhibit particular persons' passions in the same way. This is not the man's acting: but his organisation. Do you follow me?"

"Well, not quite clearly just here" says John, who has been amusing himself by making a bet with the "other" party, the party we gamble with, when practising a game by ourselves, and who always loses, that he'll get two hundred a week at Drury Lane.

"It will follow, Mr. Larkins, in time."

"I am glad of that" remarks John, comfortably beating the other party and pocketing his money.

"Under all circumstances fancy you are the party."

"Not for me" says John.

"The party you act, sir!"

"Oh! ah! of course."

"And express your actions as you would express them if you were the party."

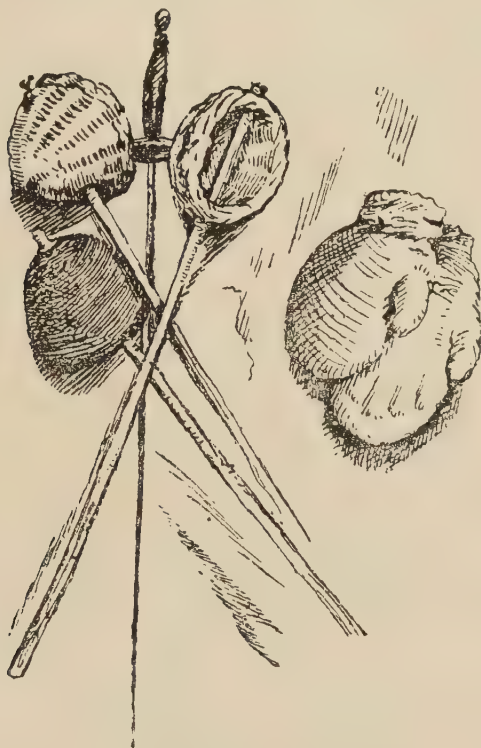
"Is there much more?"

"Not theory. Now" adds the heavy, raising his right arm, stretching his right leg out and looking at himself in the glass, "let the sock and buskin be confined to the theatre. Never be theatrical."

"That's cool" says John.

"And no less true" puts in the heavy. "In Alexander and Richard the Third, know well the character of these heroes, and ever cultivate a knowledge of moral philosophy. Hang down the head in grief; lift it up in joy. Avoid imitation: but study the best models. Don't ever put your arms above your head, save now

and then, and keep your thumbs in. Don't walk from the knee or point from the elbow. Learn to fence and dance; I told you I'd teach you, and for what, the fencing, and use your hand to your heart in such sentences as 'my hon—our!' 'my nature.' Learn your part well, so as not to talk of candles walking along with men in their hands, or other silly errors. Good night. Bless you and don't forget the broadsword and foils."



"Which I must learn" quoth John, when the "heavy" was gone "and stage dancing." "I am an actor" he went on "and one of The Company, they can't do me out of that."

A night or two, and Larkins is the droll.

"You will be careful" says the stage manager to him at rehearsal "to avert your head and draw your sword upon Briggs, when he is about to carry off Miss Jones. The young lady in question is a persecuted damsel and John, a sentinel.

"And you'll be careful to keep upon this trap!" Larkins always sees things, before they're pointed out, so he says "all right" long before the manager has had time to shew him the business.

He wears his own sword, and has had no more thought to get the point ground off, than consideration about the precise trap upon which he has to stand. He has only to say "die, villain, die!" and yet for hours, Don Quixote-like, during the day, he has been practising the action.

"Who knows but what I may get an offer of a line of business from the manager? His wife and daughters noticed me from their box last night, I'm sure of that!" They had. Such a Roman, even for a stage Roman, as Larkins presented the provincial public with, had never been seen before. He was told to walk naturally. His answer was, no man could walk naturally in tights.

"Tights, sir," said the stage manager, highly wroth "I wish you'd let your leg coverings 'be' tights and not slacks, sir, to hang in wrinkles all over your legs, like skin on a hippopotamus."

Briggs is no scholar, no actor, but a supernumerary, so though he keeps repeating the cue all day, to try and bear in mind the exact moment when he has to drag the lady off, it is not till the damsel in difficulties edges towards him and administers a pinch upon his arm, and bundles upon him, that he starts to give the lug. Alas! poor Briggs! He has been sadly bothered all day for he is diffident, and has not been able to satisfactorily arrange the manner of falling upon receipt of his mortal wound. And there is a young damsel of the market, whose papa keeps a stall, who walks on as one of "the ladies" and her Briggs is especially desirous of



pleasing. Larkins, eager for the thrust, soon manages for him. Experienced eyes upon the stage see John work his toes within his boots, set his teeth and pump his chest. Well they know the King Dick coming. Unfortunate Mr. Briggs. Miserable Briggs! No sooner is he near the wing for his exit than Larkins shuffles his feet and, not making believe but, plunging his sword into a part of the unhappy "soup," more noticeable for flesh than grace, thunders out his long treasured and bottled up "die, villain, die!"

With hands given to most inexplicable action for a dying man, in great fright, Briggs falls to the ground roaring out that he is "killed." The house applauds, and Larkins for the moment is



delighted, then bewildered. Silly supernumerary. Had he kept quiet, though he certainly departed from strict rehearsal procedure, he would have been rewarded with utility parts and the hand of the stallkeeper's daughter. But he roared and talked of actions at law and would not be pacified, or satisfied, that he was not killed. Jill Larkins had appeased his almost inordinate appetite for stout and sausages. Which latter irresolvable compound Briggs put away, by the yard, to John's no little disgust. By these mean ways peace of a sort is arrived at, but Larkins is allowed no more participation in warlike occurrences.

And the breeches, the celebrated breeches? There is played a piece in which, despite all friendly caution, John persists in wearing them. He'll shew the proprietor and manager, at any rate, if they give a him a good part he can dress it. He has already been told by the little fat man that those breeches and twopence will get him a pint of fourpenny beer any day, and he is by the wings in time for his line. That is Larkins's time, twenty minutes before hand or too late. Being breeches' performance he is beforehand.

"It will cost you half your money for fines, setting aside the disgrace," reproves the stage manager. This is very bitter to be borne, for John receives these nettles just as he feels sure of getting the praises of his stage manager.

"What's up now," he growls, half angrily and half humbly?"

"Those breeches, sir, those flunkey, Jack in the green breeches. Go and take them off directly. Proper breeches, sir, much less such things as those, sir, were not worn till a hundred years after the action of this piece."



Another night he has a "double." That is, to walk on the stage dressed as a nobleman and then to re-appear as a servant. Walking on as a nobleman affords the pleasant contemplation of his legs in tights. So much so that the servant becomes forgotten. A practice, which however successfully carried on in the world, meets with but little encouragement on the stage.

"Stunning tights, aint they?" exclaims he to the heroine of the piece. A liberty upon his part to speak to so distinguished a person.

"The 'tights' are well enough," adds the lady, looking significantly at his legs.

"Whatever are you doing in that dress?" cries Ted, "it's just upon the stroke of time for your servant, and the manager's looking out for you." Larkins starts and trembles: lo! he is not on the men's dressing room side of the stage and the present scene is a "set" one. He "gets" to the back of the stage, hops, as he thinks, behind the back scene, which represents part of a wood and contains just one opening. A lady on the front of the stage is mourning over the desolation of the place.

"For three lonely weeks have I been here and seen no soul. Ah! me, no one can come or will come!"

She is mistaken. Unconscious of seeing or of being seen, of openings or closings, Larkins, with part of his dress off, as preparation for his change, comes plump before the audience.

The people laugh and the lady looks round; but no Larkins is to be seen. "She" thinks it's a cat.

Poor John! if those who have good sense will have no cause to complain of bad luck, your fortunes will be trying indeed. He has to be rowed in a boat across a lake.

"Stand firm, look manly, arms folded like Napoleon. No mean holding on, like a coward, and squatting as a scullery maid. Keep your position, recover it." All this says the little man, who, seeing Larkins nearly bankrupt, resolves without delay to get his penny-worth out of him.

Now a stage boat floats by means of ropes that are jerked and pulled. If you attempt to keep your balance by any other way than sitting and holding on you go "flop!"

John takes wicked advice and stands for one proud moment, his eyes all round the house to come whack upon his nose.

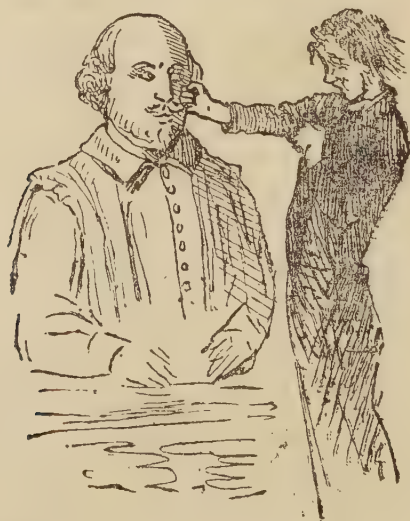
"Strike out" promptly whispers the little man from the side. "Still make a point of it, and strike out as swimming." But

Larkins hears the laughter from the front and sides and has had enough of it. The only striking out he is likely to do is in the direction of the little fat man. His next point popularises and founders him. Attending to everything but rehearsals, it falls out that for a whole week there have been long preparations to sink a lady in a lake to shew the agility of a gentleman and the "business" of the piece in fishing her out.

To sink her so that she shall be seen by the audience to go down, and keep her hand above water, and finally come up again.

This is managed by means of traps, some feet below the level of the stage, with beds upon them. The lady falls down and a woman dressed like her, shews a hand above the water, and the hero dives, to be sent up again, like a tin of the rudiments of a dinner at an eating-house, with the heroine amid plaudits.

So it falls out on the first night of the performance of the piece, and in the height of the interest, breathless interest, that Larkins turns his head near the wing to behold a lady, and a pretty one, too, falling to the machinery below. With sudden fire, bravery and success, to the rage of the manager, astonishment of the lady who is sinking most comfortably and luxuriously, and the amusement of the company and disappointment, yet roaring laughter of the audience, Larkins hauls her up.



And this is why he plays here no more.

This piece has so great a run that even out of London it goes a month. And, as one of the line of business men quarrels with his part and manager, a way is opened for Ted, who, gets his wages raised five Shillings a week!!

Larkins sticks to the "profession," and in one of his engagements marries his lady manager. A lady some score years more matured than he. From which point he progresses and becomes quite a moral character. Offering men fifteen shillings a week, and cautioning them against drunkenness. Changing his dress about three times in each piece, and always playing the virtuous gentlemen, he becomes to be endured by the gods. But Ted will none of him in the way of business. Being fairly launched in what many persist in fancying romantic waters, our actor imitates his friend and astonishes himself by getting married. When asked by Larkins "why" he does so, he replies, per post, that marriage being a sort of thing most must come to; it's as well to get it over without delay.

This is what he wrote. But the sly fellow was over head and feet in love with a pretty dancer who came to the theatre.



"I really like you, honestly and truly," said the actor.

"Then you can marry me," answered the pretty, young dancer.



“But you'll have to give up the stage” added the actor, “if you marry me, I shall insist upon it, and then how will my salary do?”

“As other actors' salaries do” finished the dancer.

And married they were. Further, it proved the best engagement ever Ted made. So upon him, and his wife, and you, and all of us, and this little sketch,

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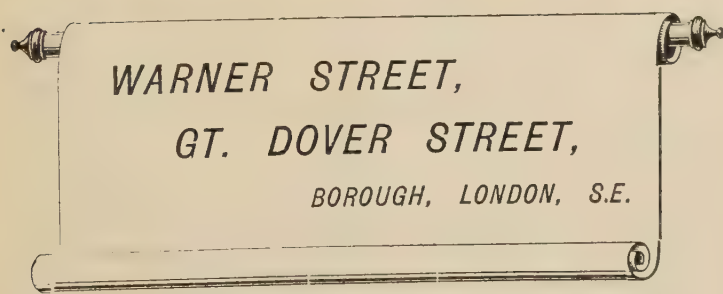
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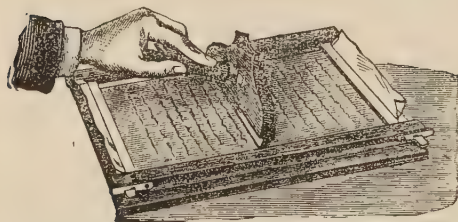
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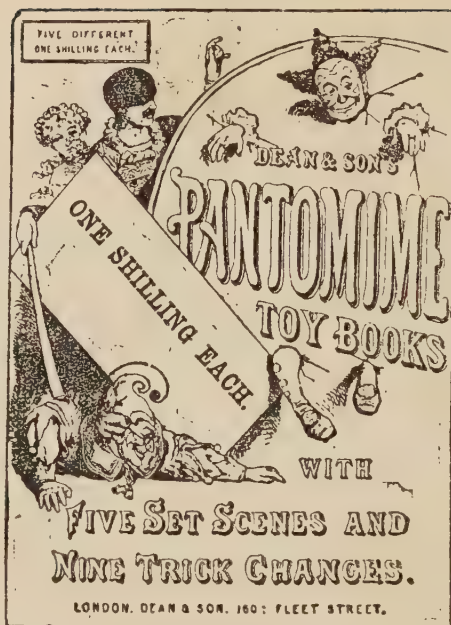
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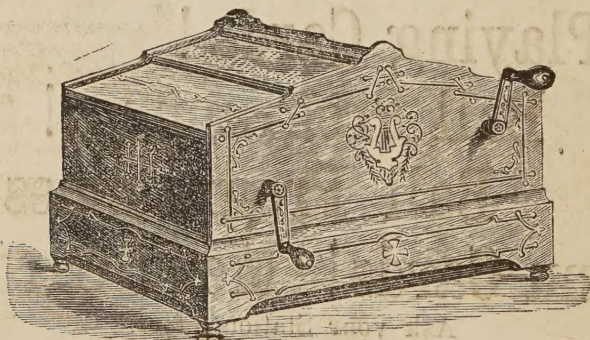
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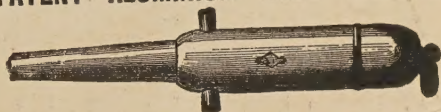
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